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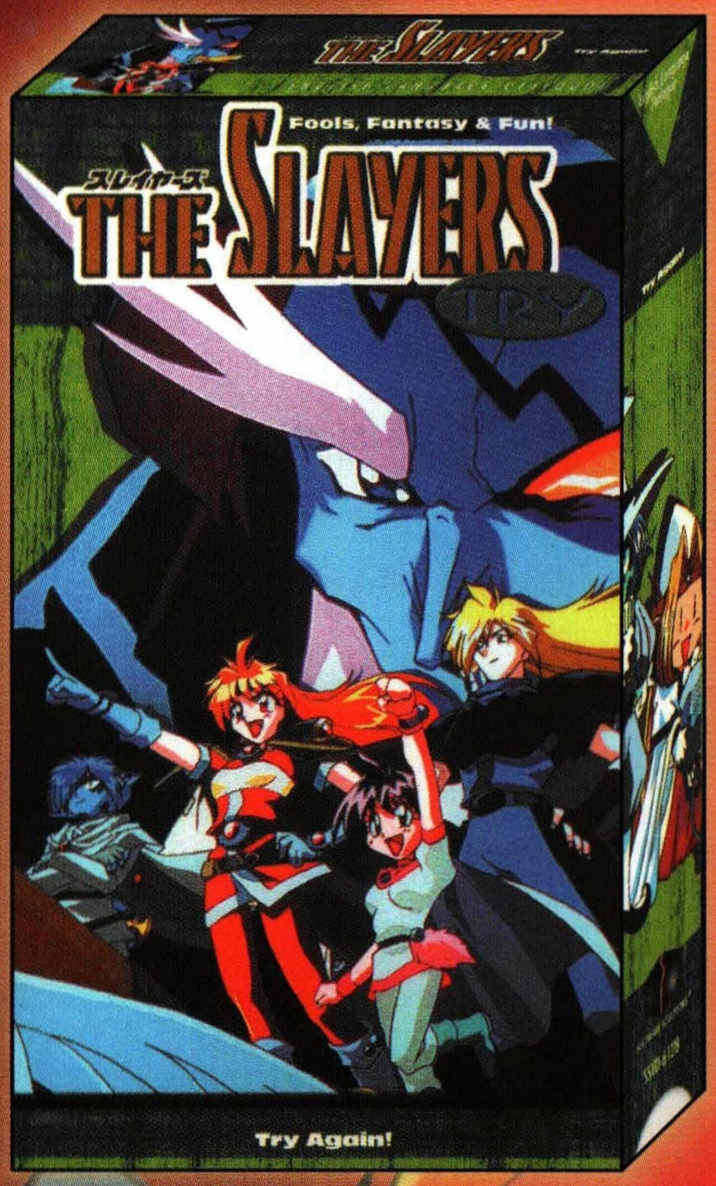

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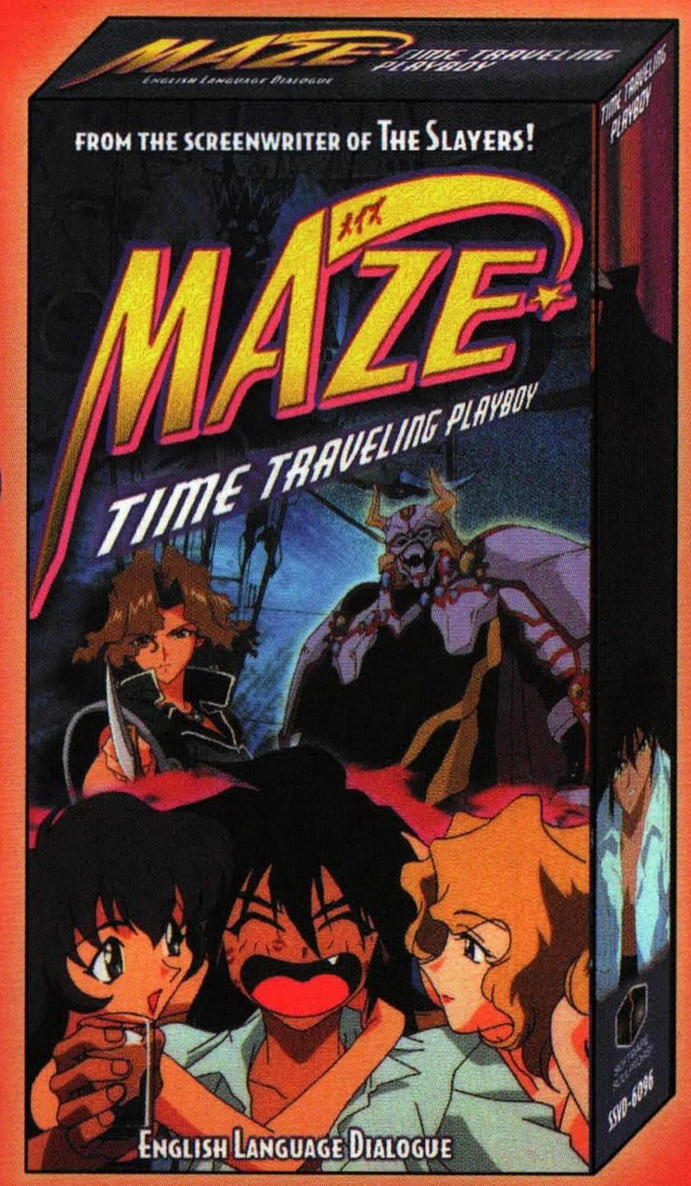

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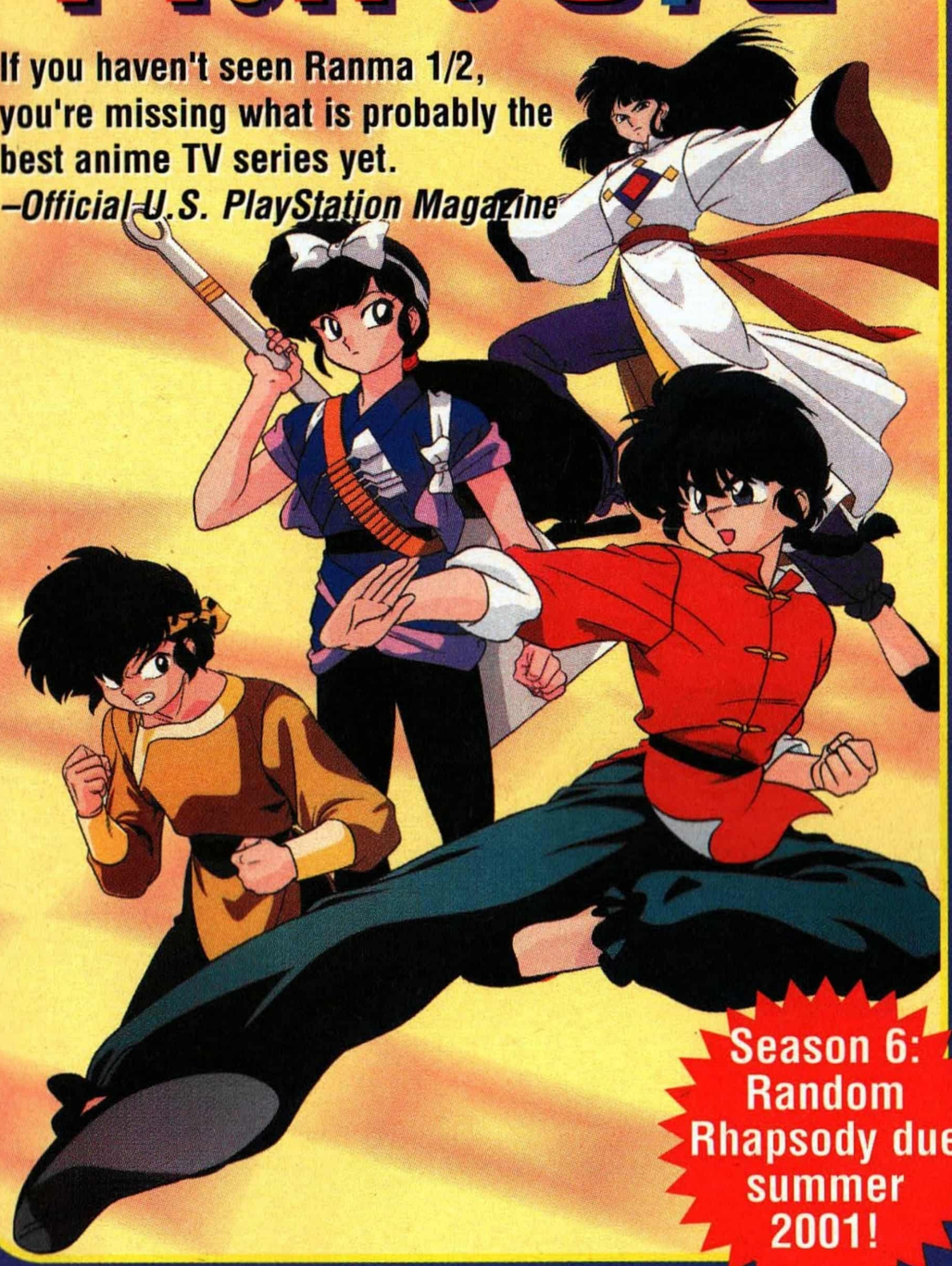

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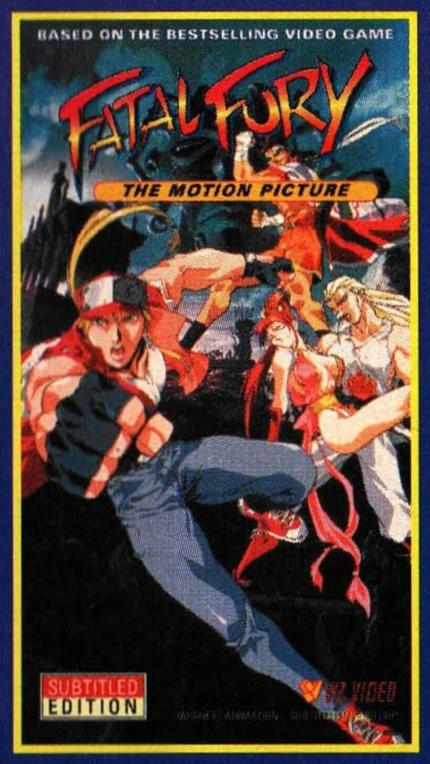

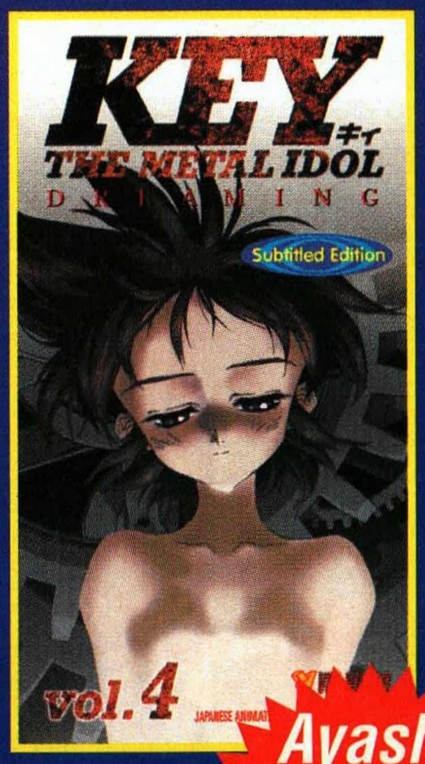

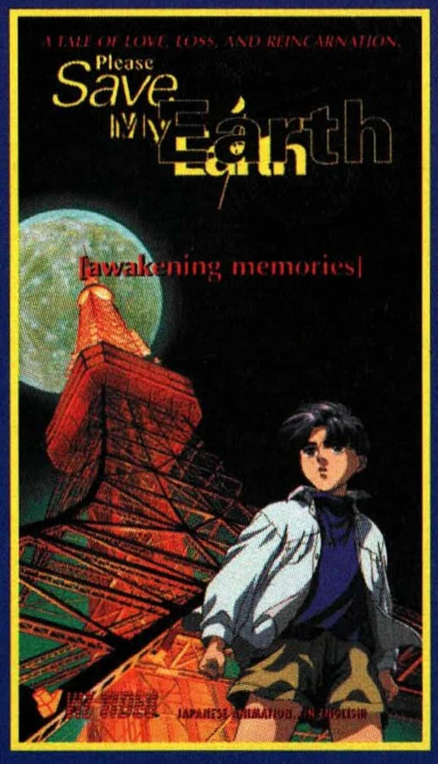

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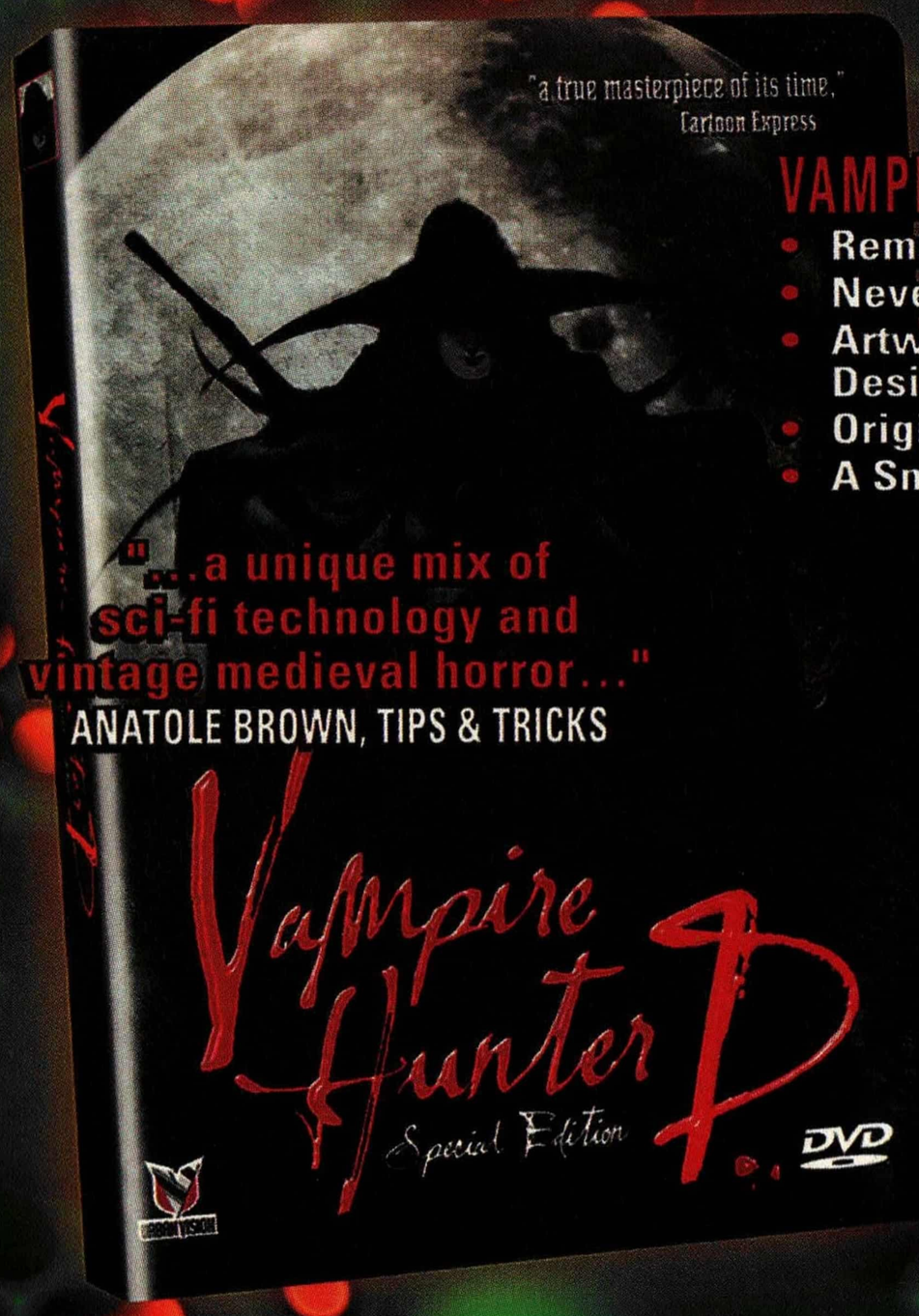
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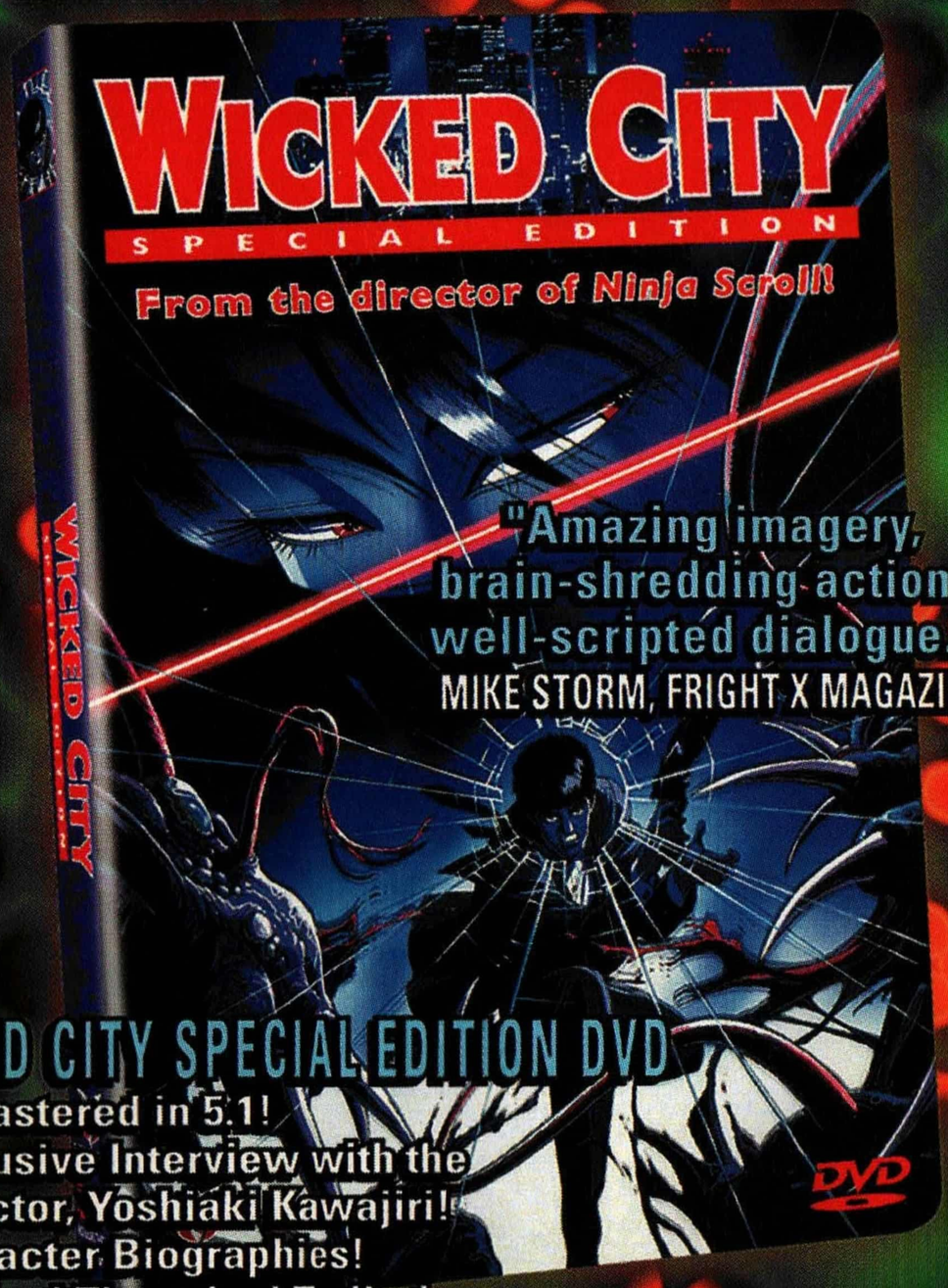

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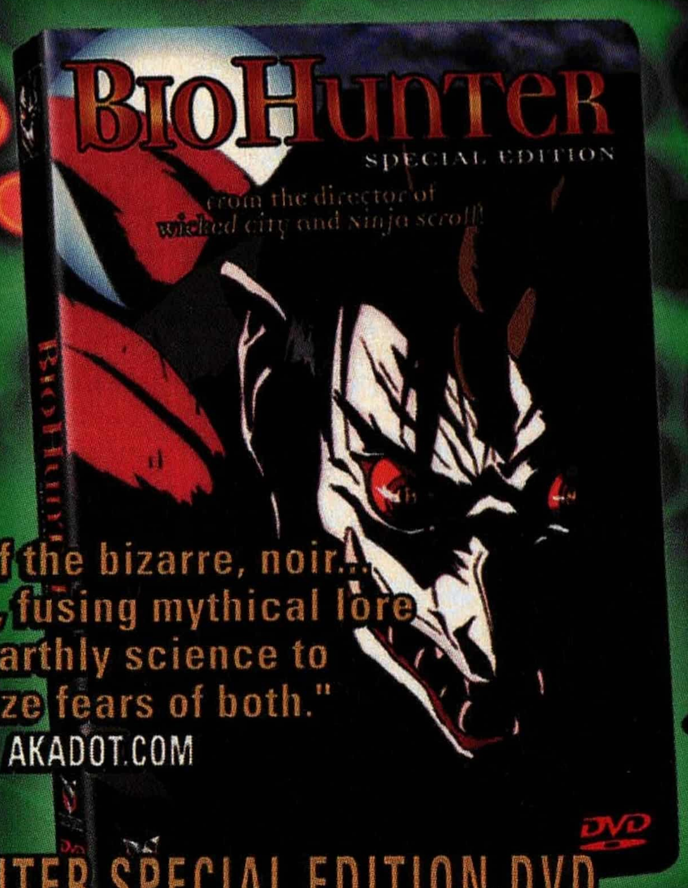
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Anime quote of the month: "Magic Naked Apron!"

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MILLENNIUM EDITION

Okay, so I'm using the above title because, well, the time is right and I can, and honestly—how many more times will a new millennium come up? None that any of us are likely to see, so we'd better make the best of this one.

This is *ANIMERICA*'s "millennium edition" in more ways than one. (For starters, didja notice the nice gold-effect title?) This issue marks our very first "Best of the Best" feature, where we've assembled your Fan Award votes for your favorite anime and manga titles as well as singled out some of our own favorites of the year. (We were gonna do music and toys too, but didn't have *room* for that section.) Additionally, we've included profiles on two of the industry's MVPs, just to give you a little grounding in the sorts of things we mean when we say "best."

Okay, so you're probably thinking that we've got a lot of nerve to even *try* to come up with a list like this. Yeah, well...we have. And sure, we could have come up with a *much* longer list (see the above note about our music and toy sections), but you've gotta draw the line somewhere, and at least that gives us something to talk about next time. And hey, if you don't like our picks (or you do, but you want to become part of the process, in the best democratic fashion) you can always send in your Fan Award votes for your own favorites.

Like the Fan Awards, the "Best of," especially the creators' hall of fame, is something we'd like to make into an annual tradition, and that way, we can select a different lineup each year to induct into the annuls of anime and manga legend. At any rate, we had a lot of fun putting this one together—we hope you'll like the result.

This issue is also another benchmark in the magazine's history because it marks the depature of one of our most key staff members. Our stellar graphic designer Andrea Rice is moving on to take up a new career in textile design. Since she first started on the magazine in 1995, Andrea has masterminded this publication's evolution from a slim, newsprint 'zine into the pretty glossy product you hold in your hands today, and I think nearly any *ANIMERICA* reader would agree that her sense of color and design, and especially her creativity in presenting the features, has been exceptional. Although we're very sad to lose such a valuable member of the team, we've got nothing but confidence that her new career will be a rousing success. Raise your glasses to Andrea this New Year, folks, and wish her well.

Fan art by Kim Reed, Age 25, of Hollywood, CA

Along with departures, of course, come arrivals. Ringing in the New Year with us is our new designer Janet Piercy. If you're the type that reads staff mastheads carefully, you'll have noticed over the past few issues that she's been with us for a little while now, learning the ins and outs of the magazine and getting a feel for things. Next issue, she'll be flying on her own, and we look forward to seeing what she'll be doing with *ANIMERICA*'s look in the future. So give Janet a big welcome as well when you do your New Year's toasts.

What's the new millennium going to bring? (Yes, that's right—the new millennium *officially* begins in 2001.) We don't know—who does?—but we're pretty sure that this is the time for anime to go even more global than it has already, and we predict that not only will we see more translated anime on U.S. TV, but we'll see more anime created specifically for America on television and in theaters. And we're equally sure that we'll see more Western animators looking to the East when contemplating projects. What will this kind of "fusion" between cultures and styles will bring in the long run? All we know is that it should be something to watch happen.

Welcome to the future.

Julie Davis
Editor in Chief

CONTRIBUTORS

P. Duffield (Best of Best: Osamu Tezuka) has been crusading to bring a wider variety of anime to the attention of fandom for longer than she'll allow us to mention. Having lived four years in Japan, she knows many of Japan's most popular authors and titles don't make it to English. So she's always eager to write for *ANIMERICA* and *ANIMERICA EXTRA* about famous anime and manga overlooked in the U.S.

After years of trying to assert their individuality, **Keith** and **Aaron K. Dawe** (Spotlight: ***El-Hazard***) find themselves once yet again, sharing the limelight against their conflicting self interests. This unfortunate turn of events have brought back (un)cherished childhood memories of creating their own comic books, unexplainably influenced by ***Battle of the Planets***. And ***Star Wars***. To anyone with a brain, this will regrettably make it easy to deduce their approximate ages. But who wants to know?

ANIMERICA Designer **Andrea Rice** bids her sad farewell with this issue. Says Andrea, "Thank you so much for all of your support. I have loved working on *ANIMERICA* and I will miss everyone at Viz so much. Best wishes for the future!"
xox

ANIMERICA
INTERVIEW

Chiho Saito and Kunihiko Ikuhara

Manga artist Chiho Saito and director Kunihiko Ikuhara answer our questions about reality, fantasy, and feminism in ***Revolutionary Girl Utena***.

Interview by **Julie Davis** and **Bill Flanagan**

At Anime Expo 2000 in Anaheim, California, manga artist Chiho Saito and director Kunihiko Ikuhara met with an audience of American anime fans. It wasn't the first time either creator had visited an anime convention in the U.S., but this was certainly the largest crowd to see them so far, and the convention boasted two things that set their appearance apart from any other—the U.S. premiere of the ***Utena*** movie, ***Adolescence of Utena***, and the announcement that the ***Revolutionary Girl Utena*** manga would soon be published in English in the pages of *ANIMERICA EXTRA*.

As the director of both ***Sailor Moon*** and ***Revolutionary Girl Utena***, Ikuhara's work was a known quantity to the convention crowd, but Saito was more of a mystery. Hand-picked by Ikuhara for the ***Utena*** project, Saito was key to creating the style and look for the ***Utena*** series through her manga version of the story, and also in the early stages of the design process. As members of the "Be Papas" team, Saito and Ikuhara worked on the designs for ***Utena***'s characters and settings together, faxing their ideas back and forth until the perfect result was achieved.

"It took a *very* long time," Saito said. "I'd make a drawing and fax it over, and Mr. Ikuhara would make corrections and fax it back. That included everything: hairstyles, uniforms, all sorts of things like that. It took so much time and so many drawings to get the final okay!" she laughed. "Of all the manga I've drawn, I've *never* had to do so much work on character design."

Saito first became a manga artist by winning one of Shogakukan's monthly contests for new artists. Since her debut title, 1982's ***Ken to Mademoiselle*** ("The Sword and the Mademoiselle"), Saito has published more than 60 volumes of manga, including the five-volume ***Utena*** series and a manga adaptation of the ***Utena*** movie. In retrospect, it's hard to see how ***Utena*** could have been done by anyone else; Saito's work has never shied away from controversial subjects, and ***Utena***'s exploration of gender roles reflects some of her own feelings on feminism.

"I've read quite a few books on philosophy, and I was wondering about my future," she said. "I realized that if I don't free *myself*, I can't do what I hope to do in the future. When I started working with Mr. Ikuhara, that question came up as well. It turned out that everyone, including the screenwriter, had read many of the same books, and everyone had approximately the same outlook. This philosophical viewpoint became a part of the basic setting of the story. The theme became one of: what struggles do women go through in their search for happiness?"

Ikuhara agreed. "With ***Utena***, the main character wears a male uniform—but it isn't really a male uniform, is it? It's just the clothes that Utena likes. She's not bound by the same male/female conventions that previous characters may have been bound by. I don't think that society has changed all that much, but in modern manga, a person is allowed to follow her own path."

As a director on the ***Sailor Moon*** TV series and movies, Ikuhara had already been dealing with such issues for some time. But with ***Utena***, Ikuhara was able to go to another plane altogether, to a place beyond reality—even beyond the superheroic reality of ***Sailor Moon***. ***Utena***'s world is something more like a stage, or nightmare—a Dali-esque vision that could be happening inside the characters' heads, or could be happening on a metaphorical level…it's really for the viewer to decide.

Complicating the issue even further, ***Utena***'s own reality has more than one plane to it as well. Contrary to most anime series based on a bestselling manga, there is actually quite a bit of difference between the ***Revolutionary Girl Utena*** manga and the anime series. For one thing, although the entire ***Utena*** project had been developed with anime in mind, since Saito had to begin drawing the manga before the anime series went into production, early in the process she was often forced to come up with her own visualizations for story points that the anime series eventually portrayed in a totally different manner.

Saito described her creation of the manga as being one that got its inspiration largely through her own confusion about what exactly she was supposed to show, and Ikuhara's own vague answers to her questions. After trying several approaches, she just went ahead and started writing the story as if it were a fantasy. "And well into the manga series, the TV series started, and I realized just how wrong I was," she laughed. "Eventually, when I saw the animation, I finally realized that it was a projection of a world that is, in fact, inside the character's minds, and that's what Mr. Ikuhara wanted all along."

BEGIN INTERVIEW

ANIMERICA: You have a lot of sword imagery in your work. How did that theme come about?

Saito: When I was young, I watched ***The Three Musketeers***—

ANIMERICA: The animated version?

Saito: No, the movies with Michael York and Charlton Heston, and I became a big fan. But before my manga stories were accepted at Shogakukan, I drew high-school dramas. Soon my editors came back to me telling me to draw the things that I liked, so I started to write ***Three Musketeers***-style stories, and that one became my debut story.

ANIMERICA: What made you first want to become a manga artist?

Saito: In grade school, I started wondering just what I would like to do, and I decided back then that I wanted to draw manga. So through junior high and high school until my debut, I concentrated single-mindedly on becoming a manga artist.

ANIMERICA: What are your inspirations?

Saito: Movies…and music. Those two are my main inspirations.

ANIMERICA: What kind of music?

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)

ANIMERICA DOUBLE FEATURE!

Check out ANIMERICA EXTRA Vol. 4, No. 1, for more of our interview with Chiho Saito and Kunihiko Ikuhara, and the debut of the *Revolutionary Girl Utena* manga series!

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(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

CHIHO SAITO MINI-BIO

Birthplace: Kodaira, Tokyo
Birthdate: 29 June
Blood Type: Type B
Star Sign: Cancer

KUNIHIKO IKUHARA MINI-BIO

Birthplace: Kanagawa, Japan
Birthdate: 21 December
Blood Type: Type A
Star Sign: Sagittarius

Saito: The best music for me is instrumentals without lyrics—that brings images to my mind that I can use. While I'm listening to the music, I can see the images, just like a movie.

ANIMERICA: And what composers do you like?

Saito: Ryuichi Sakamoto and Wagner are special favorites.

ANIMERICA: If you had not become a manga artist, what would you have liked to do?

Saito: From childhood, I was always very interested in ballet. In junior-high school, I worked on the school plays—not as an actor, but as one who built and designed the sets. I always wanted to design sets.

ANIMERICA: In many of your scenes, and especially in the animated version of ***Utena***, there seems to be a theatrical influence, like Broadway musicals.

Saito: There is a very large influence. When choosing colors, I love strong, primary colors, like a spotlight is shining on the characters.

ANIMERICA: Have you seen a lot of ballet on stage?

Saito: I have, and I still follow it closely. Earlier, when I came to the U.S., I went to the Met to see an opera....

ANIMERICA: Which opera was that?

Saito: Oh, that was ***Cinderella***.

ANIMERICA: Mr. Ikuhara, have there been any theatrical influences on you?

Ikuhara: There are plenty, but it's a long story....

ANIMERICA: Well, for example, what kind of theater did you follow?

Ikuhara: In Japan in the seventies, there was a famous man that I admired, an actor and writer by the name of Shuji Terayama. He was about as highly regarded as Yukio Mishima. I went to see his plays, and I was shocked! Mostly by the work of the man who was the music composer and stage director for those plays, J. A. Seazar. This was in my student days, so that means that I've been wanting to work with J. A. Seazar for nearly 20 years. I worked on ***Sailor Moon***, so from my entry into the field through the ***Sailor Moon*** years, I had always worked on presenting other people's projects. ***Utena*** was the first time that I could present my own work. I wanted to use the people I most respected—the people I always wanted to work with. With that in mind, I asked J. A. Seazar to compose ***Utena***'s music. And for that reason, ***Utena*** has a very close relationship with stage performances.

ANIMERICA: Was that how Be Papas came about? You gathered all the people you respected to be a part?

Ikuhara: Exactly.

ANIMERICA: Was ***Utena*** a story that originated with you, Mr. Ikuhara, or....

Ikuhara: Everybody in Be Papas gathered together to create it.

ANIMERICA: Akio seems to have a seductive, villainous personality. In opposition to that, Dios never says a word. Does this mean that a good man should just shut up?

Saito: [LAUGHS] That's not really what I was trying to aim at. [LAUGHS] Dios isn't so much of a real human being, but an ideal. But does that mean that you don't like Akio because he's a villain?

ANIMERICA: [LAUGHS] No, of course we like him. When translating, the dialogue of a villain can be the most fun to script.

Saito: I think so too. I just love writing villains.

ANIMERICA: In the manga of ***Utena***, there's the prologue, but after she enters Ohtori Academy, she only leaves it once. We know better than to ask the meaning of it, but can you let us in on your thoughts with regard to that scene?

Saito: All I can say is that scene is a very important part of the overall theme.

ANIMERICA: The theme of leaving your own personal world? The movie seems to feature that as well. Especially in the final scenes where the castle starts to destroy the world. What was the thought behind this? Was is like the cars—just another image you wanted to see on screen? [LAUGHS]

Ikuhara: [LAUGHS] The castle *may* have been a phantom object, but everything that it destroys may also be phantom objects.

ANIMERICA: So what are the projects you are working on at the moment?

Ikuhara: In Japan, there is a novel Mamoru Nagano (***Five Star Stories***) and I are working on, ***Schell Bullet***, and just before I came to the U.S., I just completed work on a CD.

ANIMERICA: A drama disc?

Ikuhara: No, I sang on it. My picture's on the jacket, and when I get back to Japan, I'll start promoting its release.

ANIMERICA: Have you ever been in a band?

Ikuhara: No, this is a new experience.

ANIMERICA: At one point, Ms. Saito, you mentioned that you read a lot of books. Which books did you read?

Saito: Philosophy books. Books that ponder the idea that the world is actually an illusion.

ANIMERICA: And did you draw any conclusions? Do you believe in an objective universe?

Saito: When I was a child, I thought the world was a solid place—I was living in it, and all I did was experience the existing world. But later on I realized that there were people in authority that were trying to change the world according to their own desires. This is true not only in a small world like a household, but also true in as large an entity as society. Those authorities can alter the world's ethics and morals, and use them as their tools. So, at the point that I realized that morality was altered by those in authority, I felt released. Since the restrictions on me as a woman were imposed by people rather than the universe, I realized I didn't have to be restricted by them. So as a human being, I will do what I need to do to pursue happiness regardless of others' restrictions—it's in the *pursuit* that I become a contented person. I can't act however I want, because I have to communicate with other people and interact with society, but if you take other people into account, you can find your own way to happiness.

ANIMERICA: Mr. Ikuhara, what do you think of America?

Ikuhara: Recently I went to a movie festival in Europe, and I realized there were a lot of people who looked to America as a world leader. So if you want your works to be seen by the world, you have to pass it through America. With my next work, if everything goes well, I'll have America strongly in mind.

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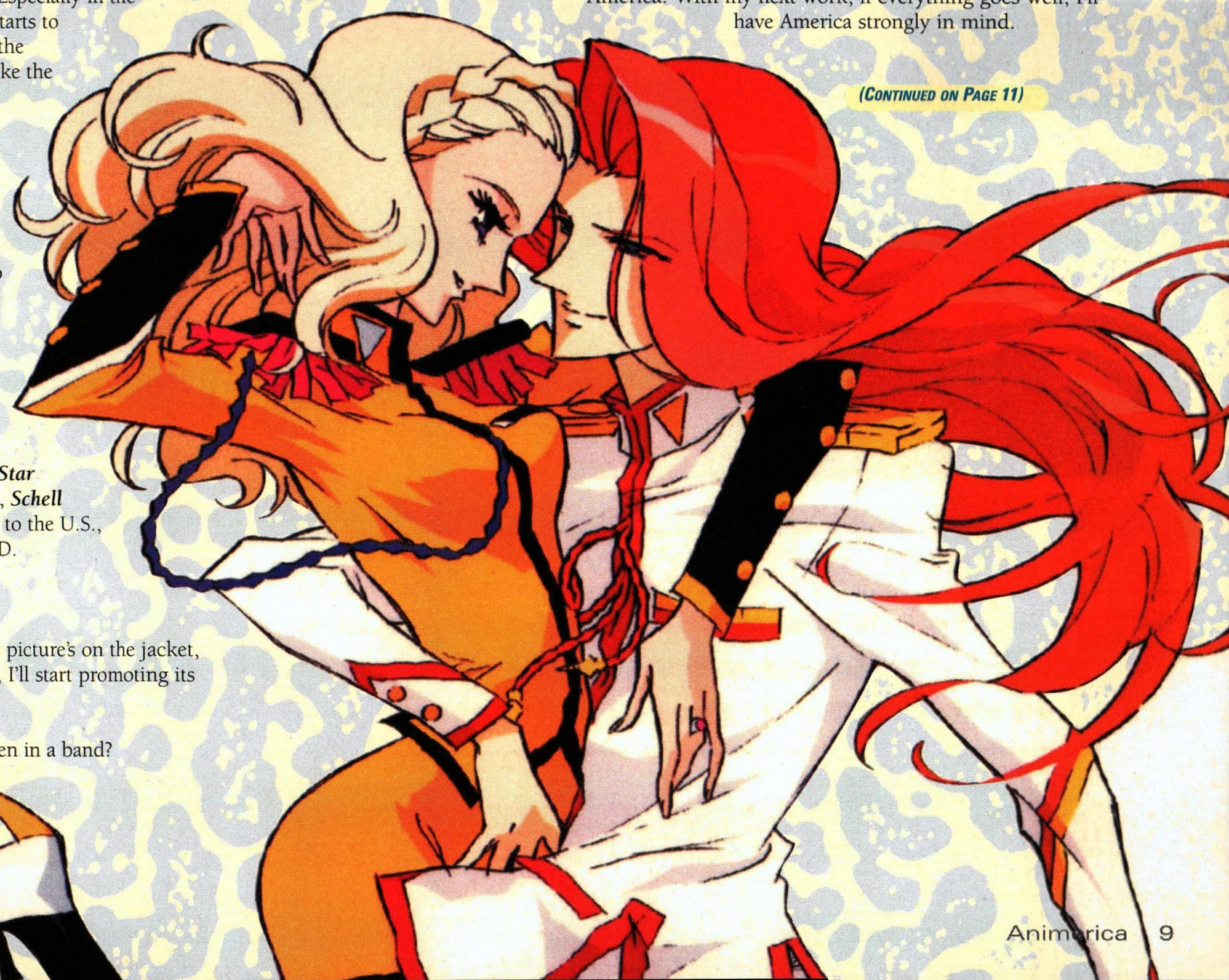

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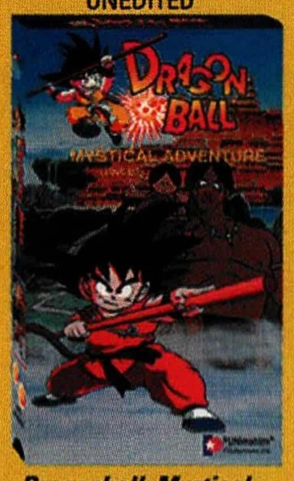

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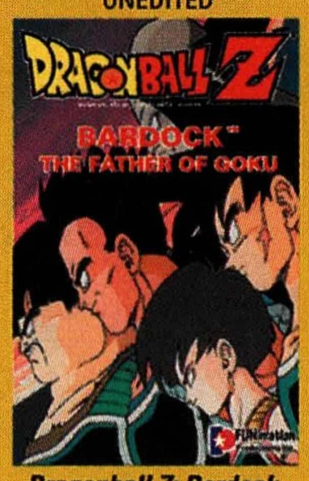

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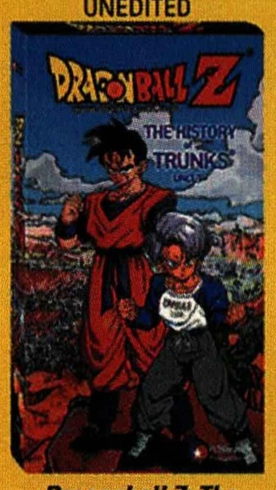

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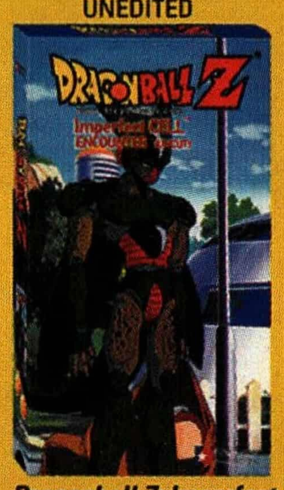
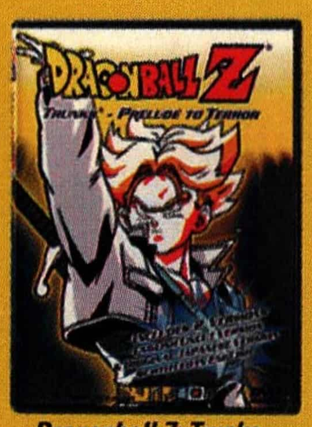
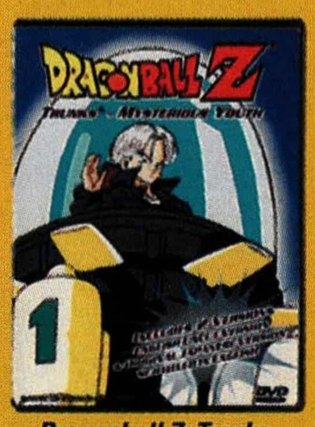


Dragonball Z: Imperfect Cell Encounter

DVD

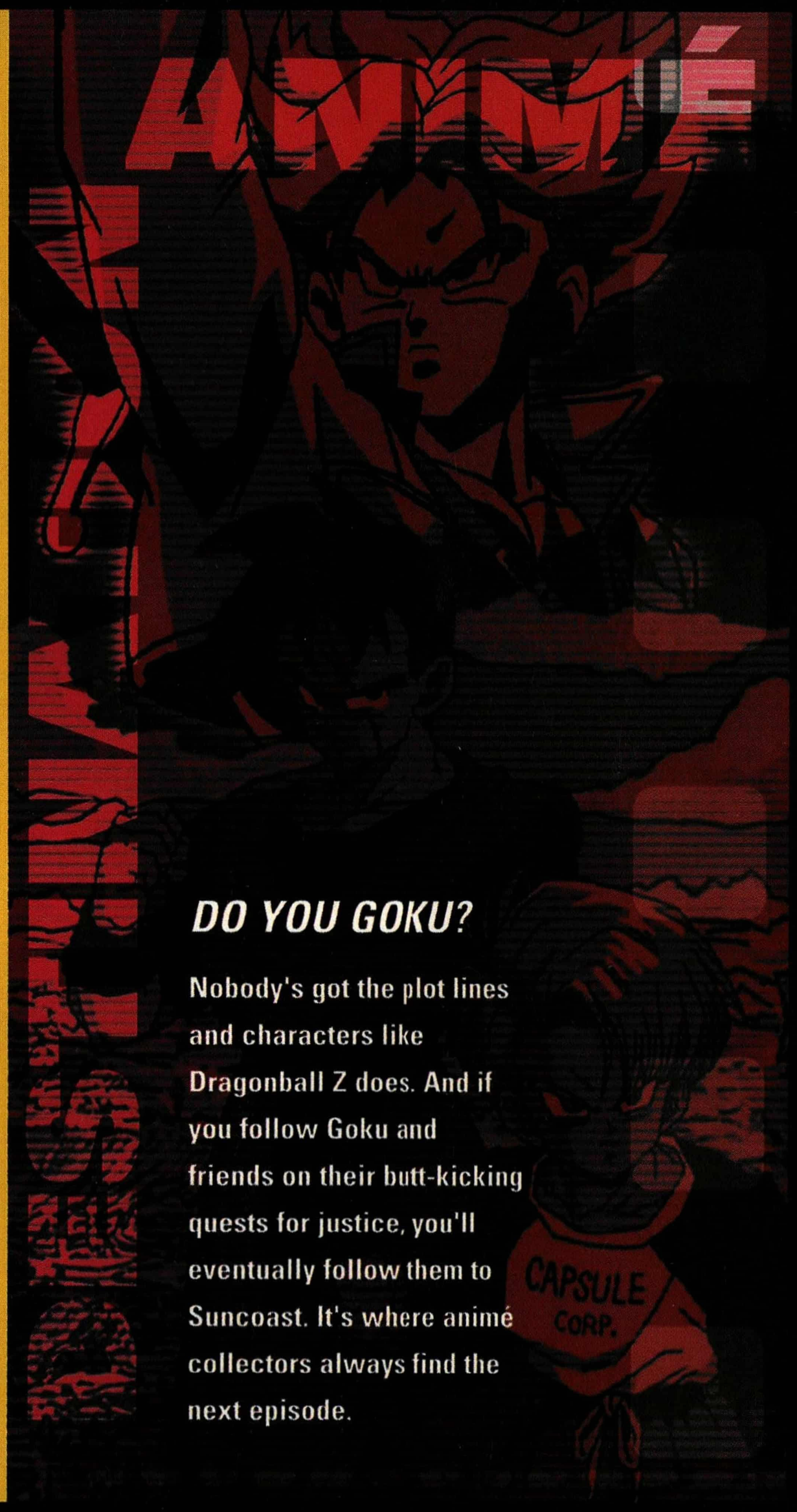


Dragonball Z: Trunks - Prelude To Terror



Dragonball Z: Trunks - Mysterious Youth

FUNIMATION



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Adolescence of Utena

The ***Revolutionary Girl Utena*** movie debuted in theaters in Japan in 1999. It's not a sequel, but actually a totally different take on the story. Rather than the fusion-fashion sense Utena shows in the TV series, Utena's cropped hair, hat, and pantsuit cause her classmates to mistake her for a boy at first. Additionally, Utena already has a history with Touga—they'd previously met, and become lovers, before the school year began. But as Utena becomes involved in the Duels and gains Anthy for the "Rose Bride," she begins to struggle to understand her true feelings for Touga…and for Anthy as well. The movie's ending is a bizarre collection of images that could be seen as allegorical, or evidence of a fantastic inner life, or simply symbols for an individual's struggle to find their place in society. "I'd like the viewer to decide," Ikuhara said.

To complicate things further, Saito's manga version is even different from the movie, with a story that's decidedly more mature in content. The relationships between the characters is made even more explicitly clear. ☆

Anthy and Utena, from the movie

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

ANIMERICA: You're not thinking of ***Schell Bullet***….

Ikuhara: Maybe it'll be ***Schell Bullet***, or other works that I'm considering. It should be a movie that will have the biggest production values that I've worked on yet.

ANIMERICA: When you say you'll have America in mind, what would be the difference?

Ikuhara: With ***Utena***, it went to the theaters in Japan, then after some time it was brought to America. I'd like to change that.

ANIMERICA: So this time, it would be a simultaneous release?

Ikuhara: Or possibly, show it in America first.

ANIMERICA: So, you're talking about release dates, and not necessarily about American tastes….

Ikuhara: When I say that I have America in mind, I mean primarily two things: the first is budget. When you think America, you're thinking big budget. The other is morals. When you aim a production at America, you have to consider the accepted world morality. That's what I would like to make the theme of the production. ☆

Saito's beautiful artwork for the manga series

Look for the first installment of Chiho Saito's ***Revolutionary Girl Utena*** *manga in* ANIMERICA EXTRA *Vol. 4, No. 1, on sale now!*

The Music of Utena

An element of ***Utena*** that especially stands out to first-time viewers is the music, particularly the songs that accompany the Duels. Operatic, yet weirdly hardcore, like thrash rock sung by divas, the music heightens the sense of unreality in the series, and signals transitions from the seemingly "normal" world of the Academy to the surrealist world of the Duels.

Be Papas

Revolutionary Girl Utena is not the product of one mind, but a collaborative project—the key staff behind its creation are anime series director and writer Kunihiko Ikuhara, manga artist Chiho Saito, scriptwriter Yoji Enokido, and episode director Shingo Kaneko.

Best of the Best

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For this end-of-the-millennium edition of our ANIMERICA Fan Awards, we decided to do something extra special. Instead of just giving you a report on your choices for the Best of the Year, we've added our *own* picks for the Best of Anime and Manga, drawn from the experiences of the entire ANIMERICA staff, including our correspondents in Japan.

When we first started the ANIMERICA Fan Awards back in 1995, weren't content with asking you to list the likes of "Best Series" or "Best Video." No, we asked you for your favorite characters, favorite scenes, favorite *moments*. After all, anyone can come up with a list of popular titles, but it takes some extra thought to come up with just *why* those titles are popular—a memorable character, an awesome fight scene…mind-blowing images, ideas, or music. That's the kind of stuff we're interested in championing, because it's these sorts of things that draw us all to anime in the first place.

So, without further ado, we present our list of what we found unforgettable in anime and manga. At least for *this* year….

Anime

BEST ANIME TO HAND DOWN FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION
Speed Racer
1967's ***Speed Racer*** isn't a *shôjo* tale, a giant robot saga, or a wacky comedy fueled by romantic hijinx. This means that Speed, Pops, Trixie, Racer X, and the rest of the gang are unique, even after all these years. Blessed with the kind of innate goodness normally reserved for cherished storybooks, it's the ideal My First Anime for tykes too young to tell a ***Bubblegum Crisis*** from their first cavity.

BEST ALTERNATIVE TO WATCHING THE STAR WARS TRILOGY YET AGAIN
Mobile Suit Gundam I-III
Hey Yoda ears! How many times can you possibly watch ***Star Wars, The Empire Strikes Back***, and ***Return of the Jedi*** in one lifetime? Do you think it's the only sci-fi troika out there deserving of the honor? There's still the ***Mobile Suit Gundam*** trilogy, released to Japanese movie theaters in 1981-82, to watch repeatedly until your VCR (or your eyeballs) finally call it quits. Assembled from a 43-episode TV series, the three movies flow together perfectly, hitting all the "sweeping space saga" bases with the welcome addition of giant robots. And best of all, the concluding chapter doesn't end with a bunch of teddy bears saving our heroes' butts.

BEST BIG-SCREEN SPECTACLE
Akira
Some films are just at their best writ large—***Akira***'s speeding motorcycles, futuristic cities, and jaw-dropping special effects upped the ante for theatrical spectacle, and the story's blend of action, violence, and philosophy made for a combo that still can slam viewers with the power of a swung lead pipe. And like ***Star Wars*** or ***Saturday Night Fever***, many a stunned viewer has gone straight from the movie theater to the music store to look for the soundtrack.

BEST GOTH HERO
Vampire Hunter D
Break out the cape and white makeup, this is the anime where the brooding, tortured-soul vampire gets the girl. *Atmosphere* only starts to describe this world—ancient castles built on the jagged peaks of cold, sunless mountains house vampires who feed on the nearby villagers at night…that is, until "D" comes to town and begins hunting them down. Yes, you do get a sexy scene where the busty blonde damsel who asks D for help offers him her neck in payment. (You also get one of the weirdest sidekicks to be found in any medium—D's own hand, which has a mouth and talks.) ***Buffy*** and ***Angel*** fans take note.

BEST ANIME FOR POP-CULTURE TRIVIA BUFFS
Cowboy Bebop
With enough movie references to make Quentin Tarantino reach for his film guides, ***Bebop*** kicks it in the style of an episodic super-'70s cop show, with offbeat humor, recreational drug references, Bruce Lee inspired Jeet-Kun-Do, sexy-looking spaceships, laser blasts, a cute dog, and a tough girl bounty hunter who always wears short shorts. The sleek animation, stylish design, Yoko Kanno's cooler-than-cool music give ***Bebop***'s ***Mystery Science Theater***-style postmodern nerd appeal a groovy edge.

BEST THERAPY SESSION
Neon Genesis Evangelion
So you think you have problems? Try fighting against alien invaders to save Earth while dealing with a long list of personal issues at the same time. A plain, ordinary chemical imbalance seems like a picnic compared to the truly world-class messed-up-ness of ***Evangelion***'s characters. The highlights of this sci-fi series aren't the skyscraper-sized robots, underground cities, or freakish monster mashes against bizarre alien invaders, but the spectacle of watching these royally confused people trying to overcome their insecurities and self-loathing, and seeking their cold, calculating parents' love. It's all about perspective….

BEST DECAPITATION
Princess Mononoke
After being infected with the beast-god virus, hero Ashitaka not only has a gross black stain migrating up his arm, but he seems to have gained special powers, such as the ability to fire an arrow (from a fair distance on galloping horseback, no less) that can take off a man's head—something you don't see every day. This unexpected event has been known to surprise theater audiences into nervous outbursts of laughter.

OUR 10 FAVORITE ANIME SERIES OF THE YEAR
Cowboy Bebop
Gundam Wing
The Vision of Escaflowne
Blue Submarine No. 6
Revolutionary Girl Utena
Trigun
Rurouni Kenshin
Martian Successor Nadesico
Bubblegum Crisis: Tokyo 2040
Those Who Hunt Elves

BEST VISIT TO FUNKYTOWN
***Tie!* Devilman** and **Crusher Joe, the Movie**
Both these shows have got the boogie fever and they cut loose in wild disco dancing scenes that are just too good to be true. The roof is literally on fire when Joe and his Crusher friends bring the house down in a drunken, disco-floor big brawl, and Devilman learns that in order to become Devilman he must get down to his friend's basement and dance, dance, dance until the music takes over and the devil does a groove thing that tears the place apart. Who says demons don't dance?

BEST ANIME FOR ADRENALINE ADDICTS
Blue Submarine No. 6
Adrenaline junkies are cursed with short attention spans and demanding appetites. When it comes to entertainment, they tend to gravitate towards fast speeds, big explosions, crazy mecha, loud music, and liberal body counts. For such folks, ***Blue Submarine No. 6*** is the anime equivalent of Dr. Feelgood. Not only do the episodes run an untaxing 30 minutes, but are crammed with the sort of slam-bang sequences that can keep thrill-seekers pinned down with their mouths agape. What guys like Golan-Globus (the producers of ***Missing in Action I-III***) could only dream of, ***Blue Submarine*** actually delivers.

OUR 10 FAVORITE ANIME SOUNDTRACKS
Cowboy Bebop
The Vision of Escaflowne: Lovers Only
Sharon Apple: The Cream P•u•f
Star Child Selection: Hit Songs on TV
Bubblegum Crisis: Complete Vocal Collection
Macross 7: "Let's Fire! Fire Bomber
Gundam Wing Operation 1
Bubblegum Crisis: As Sekiria
Key the Metal Idol Original Soundtack
Revolutionary Girl Utena Original Soundtrack

MOST INSANE ACTION SEQUENCE
Kite
While conducting a contract hit in a men's bathroom, ***Kite***'s girl-assassin-heroine Sawa first trades bullets with bodyguards in an explosion of gouting blood, shattered ceramic tile and burst plumbing…then the fight goes headlong out the window, and drops several levels through glass, steel, and concrete, in a scene that could qualify for a Jackie Chan outtake by way of John Woo.

BEST ROMANCE MASQUERADING AS AN ACTION SERIES
The Vision of Escaflowne
Yep, it's got hulking mecha, the clash of great armies, a world-conquering evil empire, carnage, conquest, and a burly guy taking down mechanized monsters with a really big sword, but when it comes right down to brass tacks, ***Escaflowne*** is a love story. There really isn't *anything* in this series that's more important than Hitomi's schoolgirl crushes and the real suspense comes from waiting to see which handsome swain she'll finally end up with. Maybe *that's* why ***Escaflowne*** didn't quite make it on Saturday morning TV alongside adrenaline fests like ***Action Man*** and ***Max Steele***. You need your hormones turned on to appreciate this one.

BEST ANIME FOR BOY-WATCHERS
Fushigi Yûgi, The Mysterious Play
The show for everyone who thought ***Sailor Moon*** didn't have enough Tuxedo Mask to go around, ***Fushigi Yûgi*** makes sure there's enough guys for everyone to pick a favorite. Two girls gather what basically amount to harems of gorgeous young men with dreamy eyes and flowing hair to serve as their protectors in a struggle between two kingdoms. While these handsome hunks fight over the girls in question, get injured, tortured, nursed back to health, etc., viewers can amuse themselves by deciding which characters appeal to them most. Tall, dark, and handsome; or the red-head; or the blond, or…?

BEST REASON FOR GUYS TO GET INTO *SHÔJO*
Revolutionary Girl Utena
Yes, guys, that's right, this series about a pink-haired schoolgirl is one that nobody should miss. While there is plenty to enjoy on the typical magical-girl level, ***Utena*** has so much more to offer in every way possible, with an intellectual, art-film approach to its subject (the surreal action never gets too far before the Shadow Girls, which have the appearances of black paper cutouts, pop up on screen to comment in eerily Greek chorus-like rhyming couplets) while at the same time dazzling the viewer with sword-fights and intrigue. Every episode is a reminder of the great things that can be found in anime…even in the most unusual places.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 16)

A conceptual drawing of the interior of the Ghibli museum

© Nibariki Co., Ltd.

THE GHIBLI MUSEUM

Visitors will be able to experience their own Ghibli adventure as Hayao Miyazaki's animation museum opens in Tokyo in 2001. **Andrew Osmond** worries if the stuffed Nekobus can survive.

"The robot's getting bigger," admits Goro Miyazaki, as he looks down on the scale model of the Ghibli museum—officially Mitaka City Animation Museum, but what's in a name?—and its Laputan rooftop guardian. "It's five meters tall, but it keeps growing." However, the Ghibli director's son is more concerned about the cuddly Nekobus. In case you've forgotten (shame!), the Nekobus is the twelve-legged ***Totoro***-carrier that races through Japanese forests and over telephone wires, with a grin that would terrify a Cheshire cat. Now a stuffed Nekobus will be included in the Ghibli museum, large enough for kids to climb on and in and pretend they're friendly animist spirits.

Or, more likely, for kids to climb on and in and try to disembowel the poor thing. "It will have to be very strong," agrees Goro Miyazaki. "And it's going to be hard keeping it clean." (Goro Miyazaki heads Museo D'arte Ghibli, the company which manages the museum.) The Nekobus has already been moved about on the museum's floor plan, to avoid unsightly scrums and bottlenecks. It's currently on the second floor, some way into the tour. (And own up—how many *ANIMERICA* readers were thinking of trying it?)

The museum is presently under construction: work started in March 2000 and is scheduled to end next June. The open-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 16)

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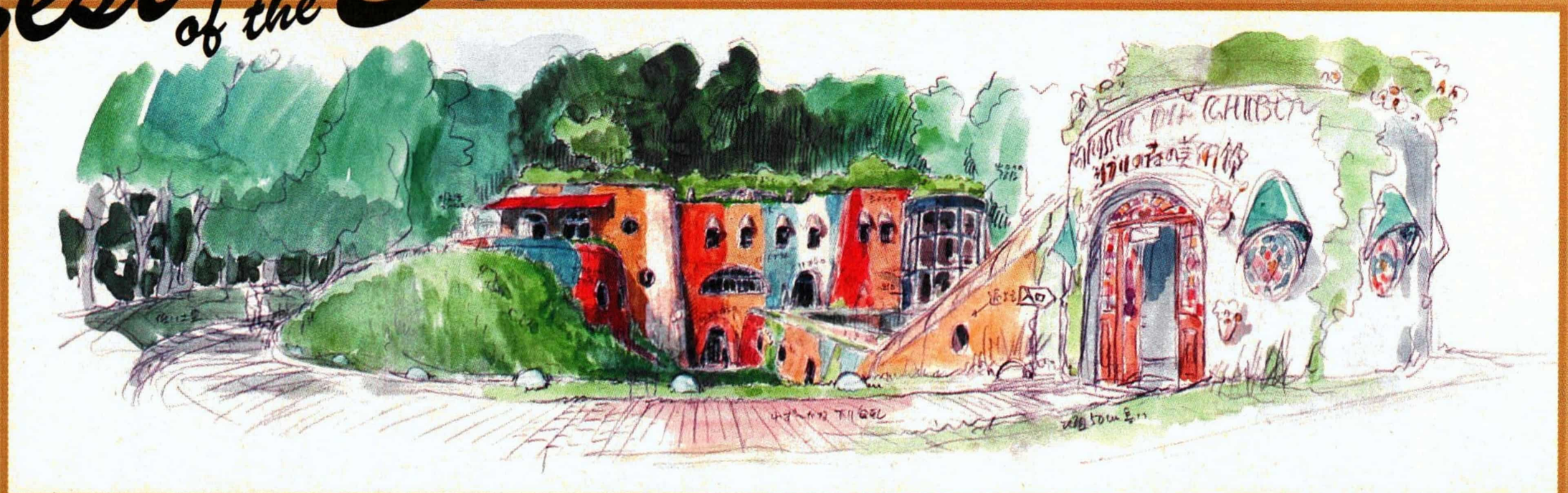

A sketch of the museum exterior

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Anime

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13)

BEST TRANSITION TO U.S. TV
Star Blazers
Although the more brutal moments were excised from the U.S. TV version of the much-beloved anime classic ***Uchû Senkan*** ("Space Battleship") ***Yamato*** (the "royal bee-jelly" grinder comes to mind), the series' main message carries through intact, complete with global apocalypses; noble sacrificies; and the importance of knowing when fighting isn't just right, but *necessary*. The English dub's plethora of lovably outrageous character accents (Mark Venture's Tony Curtis-style Brooklyn twang, for instance) only add to the appeal of a series that still has the power to impress, more than two decades later.

BEST CASE OF A DUB VOICE-ACTOR "MAKING THE ROLE THEIR OWN"
Eddie Allen (Leader Desslok), Star Blazers
A effeminate, jaded, patronizing sneer (with just a hint of a lisp) common to decadent Roman leaders in countless gladiator movies, Allen's rendition sounds nothing like the deep tones that emanated from Japanese voice-actor Masato Ibu's pipes, who was the Japanese leader "Dessler." Allen's choice, perfect in its own way, instead gave the alternately villainous and honorable Gamilon leader loads of decadent rock-star charisma—enough to make legions stand in their stadium seats and chant "Desslok, Desslok, Desslok , Dess-lok!"

ANIME THAT MAKES BEST USE OUT OF A HEAVY ENCYCLOPEDIA
Serial Experiments Lain
Like ***The X-Files***, ***Lain*** gives more to those who don't mind looking up names in a dusty tome. Expect to come away from this series needing (and wanting) to know something about the Akashic Record, Carl Jung, Vannevar Bush, the Kabbalah, Memex, and "Majestic 12." Even the infamous "Roswell Incident" comes up. The truth *is* out there.

BEST ANIME TO MAKE YOU THROW AWAY YOUR BRITNEY SPEARS COLLECTION
Perfect Blue
A pull-no-punches thriller about a young idol on a new career track, and the obsessed fan who doesn't exactly agree with her decision to quit singing, ***Perfect Blue*** is bloody and thought-provoking, and has things to say about our celebrity-obsessed culture that Selena fans would find particularly poignant.

BEST ANIME TO MAKE GROWN MEN WEEP
Dog of Flanders
Nine out of ten prison inmates and *ANIMERICA* staffers agree that ***Dog of Flanders*** is the one movie (animated or not) that will reduce them to tears every time. Based on the Flemish novel, ***Dog of Flanders*** tells the story of a young boy named Nello and his dog Patrash. Suffice to say that the humiliating hell and torture these sweet, good-natured characters are put through is enough to make anyone shed a tear. The heartrending climax of the film, set in a church, will haunt viewers for a long time. If you're thinking ***Milo and Otis*** when you see the box cover, think again.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 24)

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13)

ing date is October 2001. It will be located in Inokashira Park, near Mitaka station, which is itself a 20-minute train ride from Shinjuku, one of Tokyo's commercial centers. The museum will be compact—the total area is 4,000 square metres, with the building's actual floor space accounting for 3,500. However, the interior will feel spacious and bright, with a three-storey atrium and plenty of windows.

Hayao Miyazaki, of course, is no stranger to designing in three dimensions. He was responsible for the current Ghibli studio building, also located in the Mitaka area. As his son explains, the aim of the museum is to create an unfolding adventure.

"We started by asking, How can we make the park more exciting for children?" explains Goro Miyazaki. "We talked about what kind of building, what kind of space, there should be. Many museums are designed upon very straight lines. The idea is that the buildings shouldn't draw attention away from what's in them. We wanted the opposite—a building that was exciting and powerful, but also relaxing. It should have a handmade, soft feel, with the floors made of wood and the walls of clay and mortar. We conceived the building first before thinking about what would go in it.

"Again," Goro Miyazaki continues, "many museums lay out pictures and other items in a neat, orderly way, so you examine them one by one. But we didn't want neat displays. It would be more fun to have rooms showing lots of things in one place, and not just pictures. There'll be all kinds of artefacts suggesting themes and ideas, including some that people won't identify. There'll be things for children to touch, examine, feel. We want to bring a lot of thoughts and emotions together into one place, into a chaos." The hope is this will give children an insight into the freewheeling process of creation, which applies whether one's drawing a doodle or making a blockbuster movie. (Or both.)

The Ghibli adventure starts before one enters the museum. The site will be surrounded by huge trees, about twenty meters high. The building itself is only half that height, though there'll be a "lower-level" floor. Visitors following a Jiji signpost will first see the museum through the greenery. At the front of the building will be an entrance booth, but only a mock-up with a Totoro inside. (No, not a real one, but try telling the kids that.) As the visitors follow the path around the building, more will be revealed by a dip in the

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 18)

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Best of the Best

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16)

The cast of ***My Neighbor Totoro*** with Nekobus

earth at the back, exposing the lower of the museum's three floors. The exterior will be painted in blues, browns, reds and yellows, suggesting disorderly comfort. There'll be more trees and greenery on the roof, so the robot should feel at home.

The museum is envisioned as a place where there are endless things to see wherever one looks. The entry hall will depict Ghibli characters in stained-glass windows, and in frescoes on the wall and ceiling (expect to see Kiki soaring above your heads). The rooms visited on the tour will be even more crowded. "The Room of Beginning" will catch one moment of making a film, with image boards pinned (not framed) to the walls, as in an real studio. There'll be lots of weird and wonderful artefacts and "cute gadgets"—the kind of things that'd speak to an animator's muse. Look up, for example, and you might see a robot pterodactyl hanging from the ceiling.

The next rooms continue the story of creation. There'll be one for background art, showing where the "stage" of an animated world is built. Another will show the process of storyboarding (*e-konte*, as it's known in anime) in all its painstaking care. A third will show how drawings go to be inked and painted. The museum won't depict the elements of production in their strict order. Indeed, the ink-and-paint stage is no more, now Ghibli has gone 100% digital. But that's not important for the museum.

"We don't want to show virtual technology," says Goro Miyazaki. "That's not interesting. What humans and especially children need are real forms, beautiful artefacts they can handle." The paint room will contain ink-and-paint bins, not the computers that the real Ghibli now uses to color. Elsewhere, some Ghibli storyboards will be bound into books, which children can take off the shelves and read. On the animation side, there will be strobe-machines and zoetropes where one can learn about the illusion of movement.

Then there's the part of the tour that's received the most fan-attention; the screening-room, offering three brand-new Ghibli films. Directed by younger studio animators, these will run between ten and fifteen minutes each, storyboarded by Hayao Miyazaki himself. One will be a mini-sequel to ***Totoro***, called ***Mei to Konekobus*** ("Mei and Kittenbus"). As the title suggests, this will feature Mei, the younger sister in the original film, and a baby Nekobus. Judging by the sketches, a giant-sized Nekobus will also appear (gulp). Another museum film will be an original story, while the third, based on a bestselling children's book in Japan, will feature kindergarten children who dream of taming whales.

Like the rooms before it, the small theatre will reveal the nuts and bolts of the creative process. Even the projectionist will be part of the show.

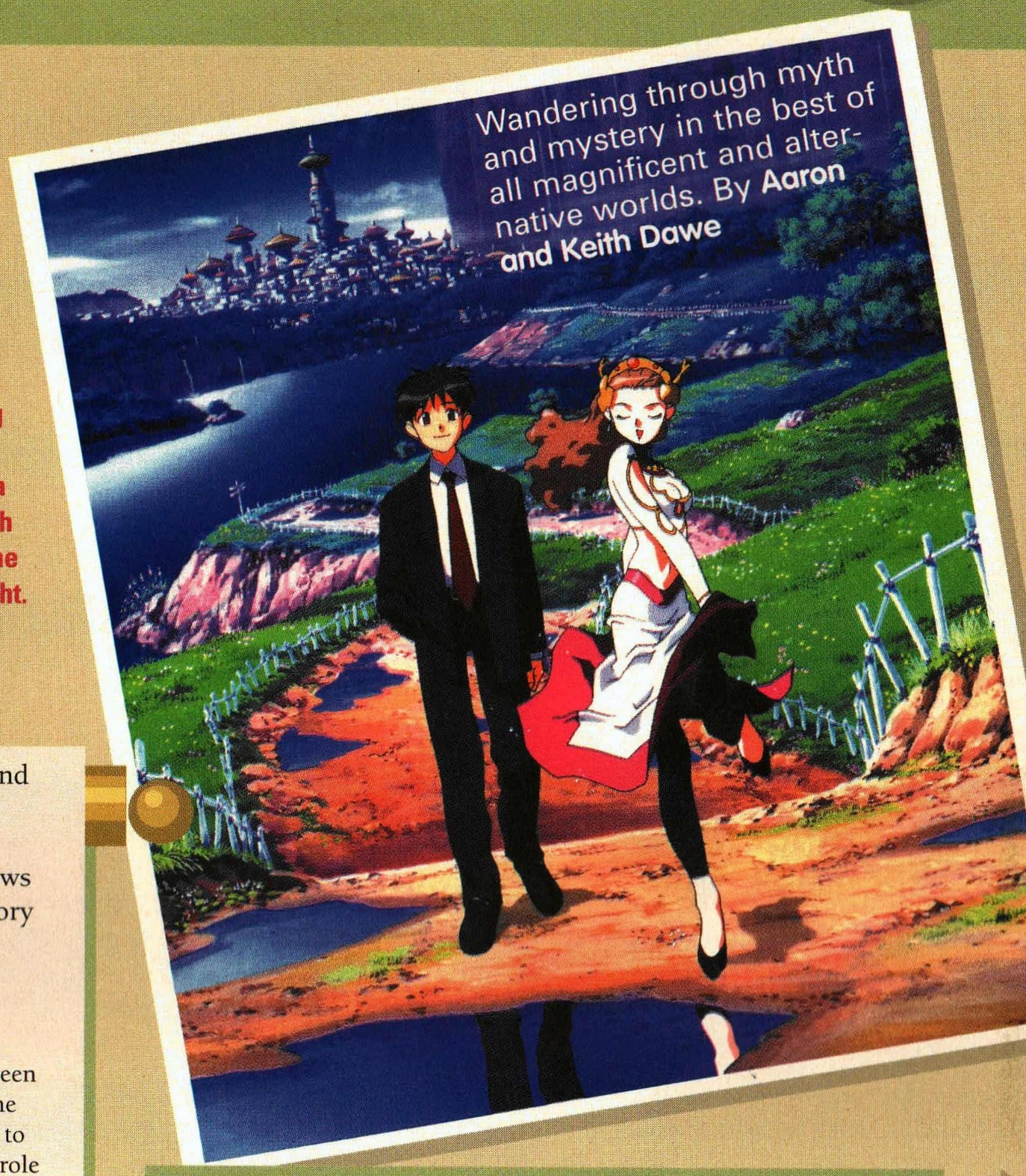
And that is that—apart from the opportunity to handle a ***Totoro***-style water pump outside, and rest at a shaded cafe. Come October, Inokashira Park in Mitaka City, Tokyo should be the Mecca for Ghibliphiles of all ages. See you there—but hopefully not on the Nekobus, which will have enough troubles.... ☆

Special thanks to Mikiko Takeda at Tokuma International for her generous help with this article!

(MORE BEST OF THE BEST ON PAGE 24)

El-Hazard

The following manuscript was found in the ancient ruins discovered recently at Shinonome High School, in Japan. You might have heard that shortly after the discovery, three students and a teacher also went missing—but no connection is inferred. Once the Aramaic script was deciphered, it appeared that the tales told therein might actually be missing segments of the famed *Thousand and One Nights*, otherwise known as the *Arabian Nights*. You may recall that this was an interminable tome of exotic tales allegedly spun by Scheherazade, the wife of the Sultan who had this annoying habit of marrying a new wife each night and decapitating her at dawn. To ward off this inevitable fate, Scheherazade came up with a plan to vex the Sultan by weaving fables, concluding each night with an intense cliffhanger. By not concluding the story, she compelled the Sultan to spare her in order to hear the conclusion the following night. Could the following adventures in the mythical land of El-Hazard be authentic entries into the *Arabian Nights* canon? You be the judge.



With her overstretched epic about the young Prince of Jurai and his entourage wrapping up and dawn fast approaching, Scheherazade had to think fast. The Sultan really likes those stranger-in-a-strange-land premises, she thought, and if she throws in plenty of beautiful women, this could be the most inspired story ever. So begins ***El-Hazard: The Magnificent World***.

Two strangers from another world appear on El-Hazard and in the process rescue the beloved Princess Rune from the clutches of the Bugrom Empire. Of the two strangers, a striking similarity is noted between Makoto and the missing Princess Fatora. Realizing their good fortune, the retinue takes Makoto and his companion, Mr. Fujisawa, back with them to the kingdom of Roshtaria. Against his will, Makoto is forced to play the role of the missing princess in order to keep the allied kingdoms together. It is decided that the Eye of God—a fearsome weapon of destruction—should be mobilized. This requires the help of the three priestesses of Muldoon, so the strangers are sent off on a quest to enlist their aid.

While meeting up with the priestesses at the Spring of Arliman, the group encounters Nanami, another from the strangers' world. Meanwhile, Makoto's arch-nemesis Jinnai—who had arrived previously and is now in command of the Bugrom Empire—learns of a terrifying weapon that could be used in his plans for conquest. Through treachery, Jinnai tricks the heroes into leading him to the Demon God's resting place on the forbidden island. Makoto reaches the weapon first and is dumbstruck to realize that the Demon God Ifurita is the being responsible for bringing them all to the world of El-Hazard. While stunned, Jinnai rejuvenates Ifurita before Makoto can do anything and commands her to do his bidding—attacking the priestesses and making his escape.

With Ifurita on the rampage, the Eye of God is opened and another unforeseen tragedy occurs when the Phantom Tribe (a despised race of Hazard) and Fatora's captors, take control of the Eye for their own pur... However, before the Phantom Tribe can start their vengeance, Ifurita ca... princess Fatora who is necessary to start the Eye of God. Makoto, Mr. Fujisawa and the three priestesses invade the Bugrom fortress to regain ... Fatora, and Makoto, through his special abilities with El-Hazard artifacts, breaks through *Ifurita's programming and get... on their side. The freshly returned Fatora and princess Rune use the Eye of God to ... off the B...rom invasion. ... due t... interference of ... Phantom Trib... the we...pon is ...contr...rita ...crifi... ...self ...p it—to fu... her des...ny so ... she ...d Mo... ...in ... the ... ...as, th... em... his se...m of ... he ... ... pa... m... erio... ar... ...ti... ...e i...*

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 21)

Thousand and One Nights

A collection of tales that first appeared as *Alf Layla wa Layla* in approximately 850 CE—although the stories are thought to originate from several countries, and both the place and the date of the original compilation are hotly disputed by scholars—these chronicles from the Middle East feature stories of mythical characters, including the well-known Aladdin, Ali Baba and his Forty Thieves, Sinbad the Sailor, and Scheherazade. The tales may have originated from historical accounts that were enhanced over time with more fantastical elements. First introduced to the West in the 18th century by Abbé Antoine Galland in French translation, the ***Arabian Nights*** have enjoyed continued success throughout the world, as the works of poets and composers from recent centuries and the Golden Age of Cinema would attest. Disney's version of ***Aladdin*** is most likely the first to come to many minds, but it is not the sole example of animated adaptations. Osamu Tezuka, "God of Manga," had his own vision with ***A Thousand and One Nights*** in 1969. While ***El-Hazard*** does not borrow heavily from the source, its influence cannot be understated. Screenwriter Ryoei Tsukimura openly admits that the backdrop, the mystical world of ***El-Hazard*** and its exotic, visual aspects, is an attempt to evoke the flavor of ancient Arabia, and the Demon God Ifurita is a likely allusion to the Ifrit of the Nights, a tribe of demonic beings with phenomenal magic powers. ☆

El-Hazard: The Magnificent World (OAV (series) © 1995 Pioneer LDC, Inc.
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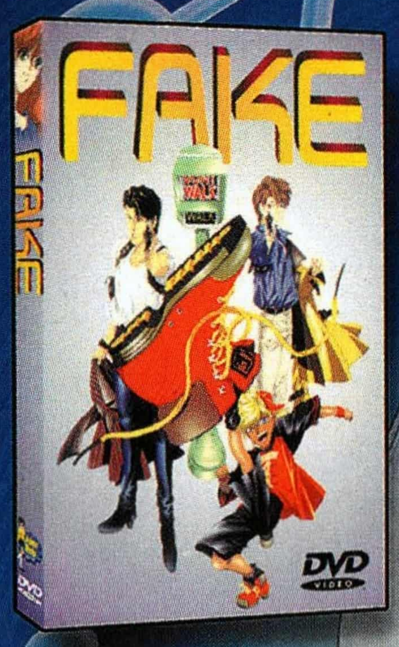

Meet Dee Laytner and his half-Japanese partner, Randy (call me Ryo) McLane, a pair of detectives at New York City's 27Th Precinct. Not only are these two crime-fighters always chasing down criminals, but Dee can't stop himself from trying to chase down Ryo. Is it just his blond hair and dark eyes that attract him so, or is it something more...

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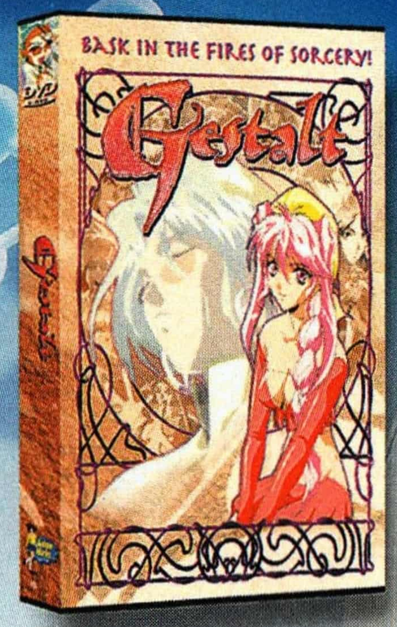
Gestalt



Oliver is a young priest of the Vasaria order, and a devout servant of his church. He has grown up with legends of a god who dwells on G, a distant island so forbidden that even speaking its name brings certain damnation! When Oliver saves the mute girl Ohiri from slavery, their destinies become intertwined and they set out on a perilous journey to G. Actually a silenced sorceress from the forbidden island, Ohiri is involved in a deadly game of survival that brings her and Oliver face to face with treacherous dark elves, powerful elementals, and a quest filled with plot twists, magic, and wonder.

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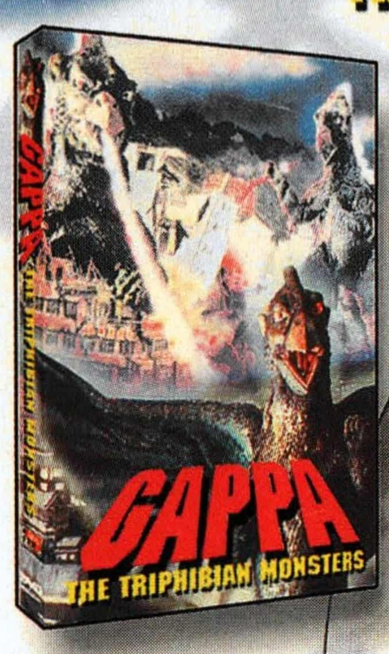
GAPPA
THE TRIPHIBIAN MONSTERS



On a serene paradise island, untouched by modern technology, a dark secret lies undisturbed for centuries. Then a greedy land developer begins his plan to turn the sleepy island into the largest amusement park in the world. He sends a group of scientists to the island and they stumble across what appears to be a baby dinosaur. Opposing the terrified natives who ask them not to disturb their god, Gappa, the crew brings their new find back with them to Tokyo, and all hell breaks loose!

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El-Hazard

ANIMERICA SPOTLIGHT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19)

That one went over really well, thought Scheherazade. That *Tenchi Muyô!* thing was getting tired. Even though not wholly original, the strong combination of comedy, action, drama and romance was just the ticket, judging from the Sultan's amused reaction. She figured, if it worked the first time, why not tell the story all over again, albeit longer and with some cosmetic changes? Thus, ***El-Hazard*** becomes retooled as ***The Wanderers***.

Two strangers from another world appear on El-Hazard and in the process rescue the beloved Princess Rune from the clutches of the Bugrom Empire. Makoto and his companion, Mr. Fujisawa, are taken back to the kingdom of Roshtaria as prisoners. Nanami and Jinnai also arrive in El-Hazard due to the sabotage of Makoto's dimensional device. Jinnai encounters the Bugrom and through conniving methods manages to convince them to enlist him as their generalissimo.

Makoto and Mr. Fujisawa plead their case and set forth to reach the three priestesses in hopes that they hold the knowledge to send them back home; in the process, the priestess Miz falls hard for Mr. Fujisawa. After several skirmishes with Jinnai and the Bugrom, which endears our heroes to Princess Rune, they bump into Nanami who has been working odd jobs to earn her keep. Failing to defeat his lifetime adversary, Jinnai awakens Ifurita; an airheaded Doomsday device more clumsy than deadly. But after multiple stillborn battles against Ifurita, Makoto and Rune at last activate the Eye of God and send Roshtaria from the realm of evil spirits on to again. Dear reader! We gather perhaps to [illegible] the scroll will wait [illegible] The [illegible]

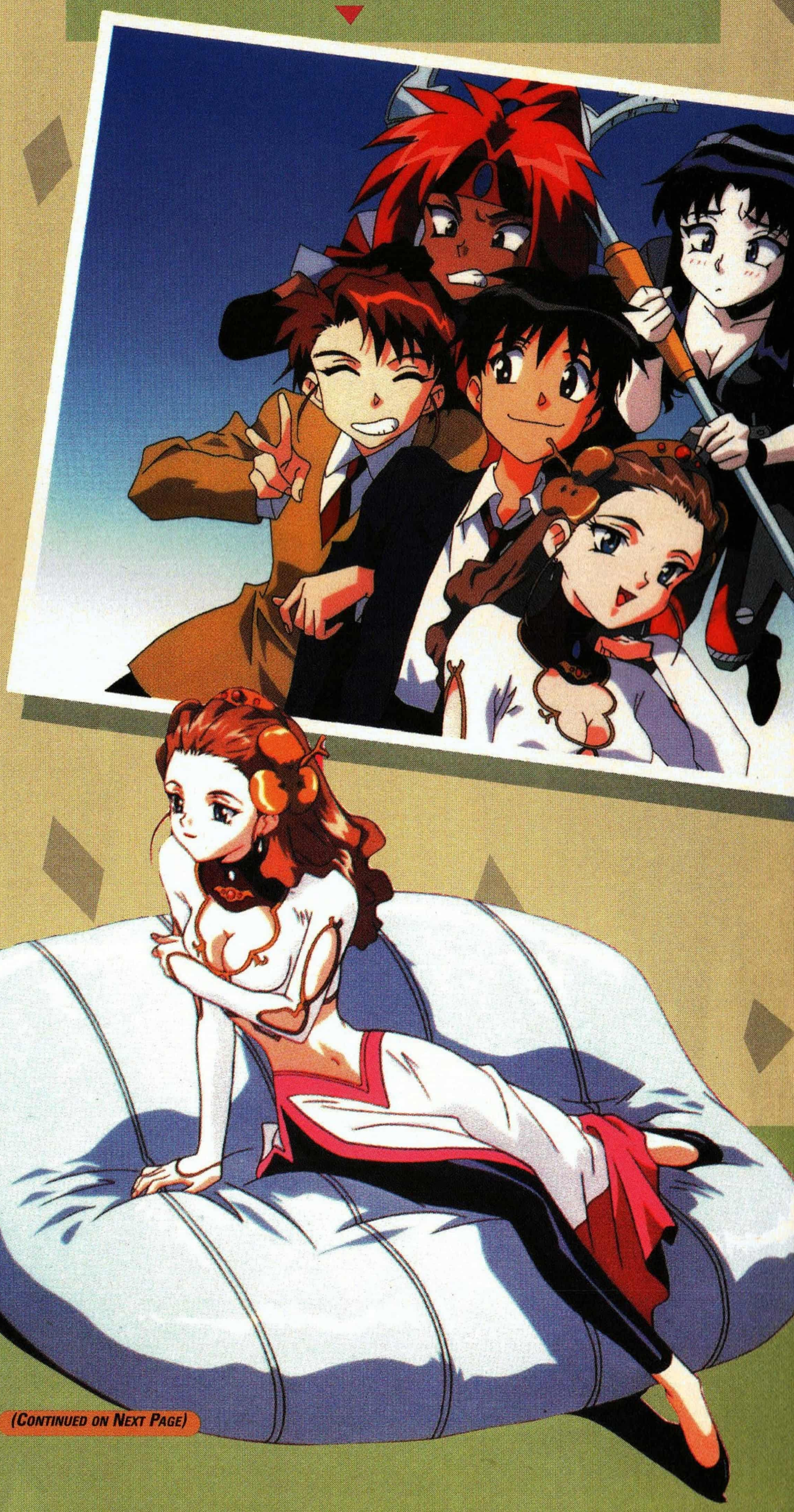
Did I err? thought Scheherazade. Was I wrong to remove the cross-dressing, the innuendo, a meatier plot? Judging by how the Sultan has spent most of the past month frowning as he ran his finger up and down his scimitar, I did. If I don't appease him with a fresh approach, this may be my final night. I've got it! I'll continue where I left off the original and bring back those elements he obviously enjoyed the first time around. I'll call this ***El-Hazard 2***.

After the kingdom of Roshtaria is saved from the Phantom Tribe and the Bugrom, things have settled down somewhat. The grand wedding for Miz Mishtal and Mr. Fujisawa is set to take place. However, on the day of the ceremony, Mr. Fujisawa gets cold feet and takes off for the mountains to "find himself." Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, and Miz demands that the other priestesses join her to get him back. Makoto and the others also offer to come along. Meanwhile, during his wanderings, Jinnai comes across another Demon God, Kalia, who he awakens.

Makoto and the others arrive in a sanctuary that was hidden in the mountains as an illusion. They are shocked to find Ifurita, who doesn't recognize them. Her master, Yuba Yurias, also from another world, explains that there are more than one, as well as informing the travelers that there is something called the Trigger of Destruction in his domain. Jinnai and Kalia arrive and are welcomed when Jinnai slyly tells the group that he has been rehabilitated. The jig is up however, as Kalia shows her true colors by provoking a fight during dinner. She then finds and unleashes the Trigger of Destruction—a weapon so powerful that it destroys dimensions. Ifurita is killed while saving Kalia, and Yuba sacrifices [illegible]

No Need for Comparisons!

Sharp-eyed viewers will notice a few similarities between ***El-Hazard*** and ***Tenchi Muyô!***—a teenaged male lead surrounded by a bevy of babes, a cute, furry mascot with practical applications, a seemingly endless stream of sequels.... Other series may have these aspects as well, but none of them share the involvement of both director Hiroki Hayashi *and* screenwriter Ryoei Tsukimura, who were instrumental in the genesis of the two series in question. ☆



(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

ANIMERICA SPOTLIGHT

El-Hazard

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

What a relief! The first half went off extremely well, thought Scheherazade, although he seemed to start zoning out during the climactic finale. A slight improvement, but maybe it can do without the Demon Goddess/deus ex machina claptrap next time. The characters still appear to intrigue the Sultan, however. What shall I try next? That stranger-in-a-strange-land business worked the first time, what if I throw the characters into a different, alternative world? This one shall be entitled ***El-Hazard: The Alternative World***.

During the coronation of the new priestess of Water, Qawoor Towles, Makoto and friends are transported to another world by the mysterious entity Arjah, self-proclaimed Ruler of the Universe. Makoto, Qawoor and Nanami are captured by the guards of the Kingdom of Creteria who believe they are spies, while Jinnai and Shayla-Shayla come upon the alternate world's version of Bugrom, and Fujisawa, Miz and Afura are walking among the clouds on a floating farm colony. There they discover Rune, who has met her true love. Fatora, Alielle, and Palnus find themselves in an industrial city. Makoto, meanwhile, has more important matters to attend to. He seeks the secret behind the Spring of Life, the energy source of the industrial complex and an artifact he believes may have the capability to send them back home. But it's dying and highly unstable.

Panicking from this revelation, Gilda decides to seize power from the incapable ruler, Dall, in order to save the kingdom from self-destruction. To do so, she forms a vague alliance with Jinnai to blackmail the two priestesses to break the ancient seal. Arjah begins to take a further grip on this world. With one seal open, Gilda leads Makoto inside, where he realizes the secret behind the spring and the impending threat of world annihilation. *Arjah possesses Gilda to get the activation password that or[illegible] D[illegible] possesses. When the forbidden words are spoken, the flo[illegible]ng col[illegible]ies c[illegible]mble a[illegible] th[illegible]ds are[illegible]estroyed as th[illegible] ancient [illegible]fact reforms [illegible] the [illegible]f[illegible]l. Qa[illegible] [illegible]-ser[illegible]e weapon a[illegible]e at the cost[illegible]er[illegible]. But [illegible]es [illegible]sses [illegible]Go[illegible]l so[illegible]'hayl[illegible]y a[illegible]d Af[illegible] wat[illegible]st[illegible]d [illegible]er[illegible] [illegible]er[illegible]sh[illegible]*

The Sultan has that look in his eye again. His scimitar is well polished now. Possibly I should have put a little more thought into this—for someone of my storytelling reputation, the ideas were underdeveloped and the story lagged while I scrambled to figure out what to come up with next. What on earth can I do now? I was really looking forward to breakfast. Maybe if I do a quick epilogue I can undo some of the damage I caused. No time for a plot, I've got to think fast. I'll just throw everyone into a hot spring at the mercy of the lascivious Princess Fatora and Alielle and see how that goes....

This is where the unearthed manuscript ends. Does this mark the end of the narrator Scheherazade and the chronicles of El-Hazard? Or are there more fables to await discovery? ☆

Rune
Venus

Fujisawa

Nanami
Jinnai

Katsuhiko
Jinnai

Alielle

Character Spotlight

The Cast of a Thousand (and One)

Makoto Mizuhara
Overachieving, quiet and innocent—somehow this makes this student of Shinonome High School a hot commodity in (an)other world(s). Makoko is intuitive and savvy with El-Hazard's technology, which comes in handy many a time, and displays a fortitude of character in the first OAV before being reduced to the consistency of wet cardboard for all that follows.

Katsuhiko Jinnai
Megalomaniacal? Totally psychotic? This guy bears a grudge for a slight that only exists in his own mind. His single-mindedness also makes him prone to weaknesses that all despots share—stupidity and hubris. A villain with a laugh you love to hate, he bewilders the sensible and pragmatic Makoto, his arch-nemesis. But Jinnai's mental state is a house of cards, prone to frequent collapse.

Princess Fatora
Her demure appearance belies her personality—she's a witch, and spell that with a capital "B." Self-centered, snotty, and obviously spoiled rotten, Fatora has to be the most unpleasant member of the good guys. Sharing an uncanny resemblance to Makoto, she uses this to her advantage to advance her "alternative lifestyle." Fatora's character is not included in the cast of ***The Wanderers***, but she appears in all the other series.

Alielle
Fatora's lover and handmaiden, bubbly and good-natured Alielle is always there for everybody else, even if Fatora does get her a little sidetracked at times. Makoto's similarity in appearance to Fatora does cause her some confusion.

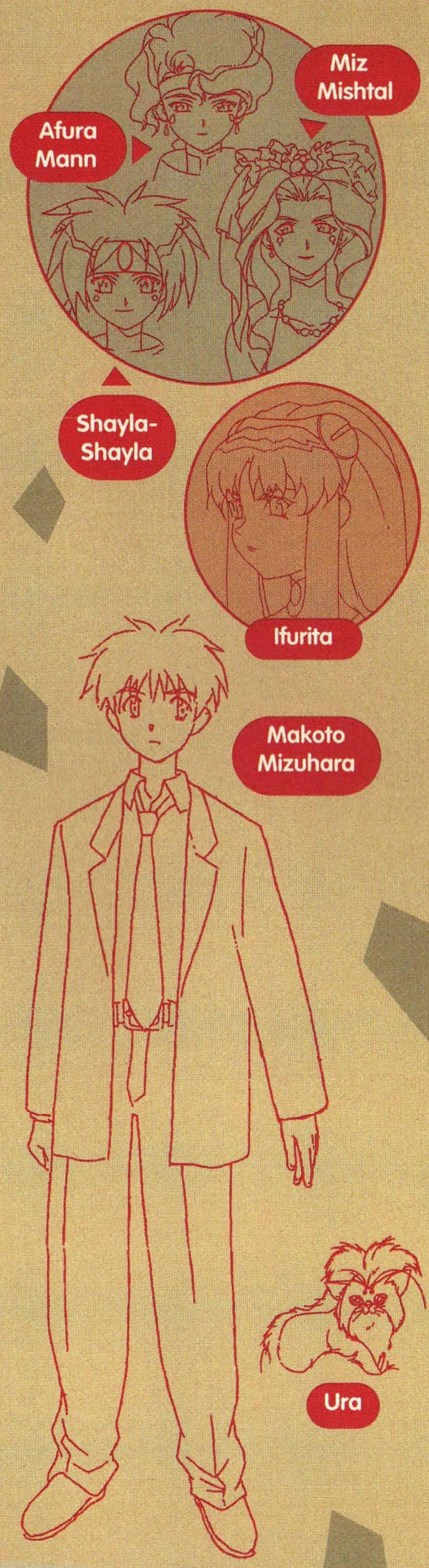
Mr. Masamichi Fujisawa
Gym teacher and perennial mountain climber, Mr. Fujisawa's sincere attempts to be a role model for his students are hampered by his vices (drinking and smoking). He is bestowed with superhuman strength in El-Hazard as long as he stays sober, but retreats to the bottle at any sign of personal hardship (a real problem, since he's fallen victim to the advances of Miz).

Bugrom
An Insectoid race that is at war with the kingdom of Roshtaria. Despite not being individually bright, with their large numbers they can be an impressive fighting force. They are at times capable of fulfilling the nefarious schemes of Jinnai—but the best laid plans of bugs and men....

Miz Mishtal
Priestess of Water and deathly afraid of not being married before she becomes an old maid, Miz latches on to the first man to come her way, the hapless Mr. Fujisawa. A tad insecure and emotionally unstable at times.

Shayla-Shayla
This fiery redhead is the short-tempered Priestess of Fire (what a surprise!). Impulsive, she acts without thinking...except when it comes to affairs of the heart. Despite Makoto's complete obliviousness to her feelings, Shayla-Shayla falls for him and competes with Nanami for his affections.

Nanami Jinnai
Where her brother Katsuhiko is unhinged, Nanami is merely entrepreneurial—making money at any time out of any situation. Unless you're Makoto, money is the only way to this girl's heart. Plucky and vivacious, she is the polar opposite of Makoto.



Ifurita
Greatest of the Demon Gods and a humanoid doomsday weapon, Ifurita is the key that sets the stranded high schoolers in El-Hazard (in the OAV). Although immensely powerful (she can level cities), in the first series has a frailty that Makoto overcomes to bring her to the light. In the TV series, she is none too bright and is treated as comic relief.

Kalia (Demon Goddess)
Another doomsday weapon, but she is not just a threat to El-Hazard, but the whole darn universe! Remember that after the first big threat, you need an even *bigger* one to make the sequel more exciting. Cunning and evil, Jinnai doesn't have as much control over her as he thinks.

Rune Venus
Elder Princess of Roshtaria and a kind and gentle ruler, Rune Venus is regal and aloof in the OAV series, but is the primary love interest for Makoto in the first TV series and gains a dragon hand-puppet for companionship. Along with Fatora, Rune can control the Eye of God.

Diva
Queen and leader of the Bugrom empire, Diva takes a keen interest in Jinnai when he proves to be able to communicate with her minions and his diabolically grand schemes match her own lust for the conquest of El-Hazard. There are also hints that she needs him for more "biological" reasons, and that's why she keeps him around.

Afura Mann
The Priestess of Wind is levelheaded and the more mature of the three Priestesses of Muldoon. This puts her in the unwanted position of being the defuser of any personal conflict that arises between the others.

Ura
A catlike creature, Ura has the ability to become living armor, wrapping around its master/mistress in times of trouble. (Probably more comfortable than a bulletproof vest!) Originally a defender of Fatora, Ura became Makoto's when he was filling in for the princess and he showed a lot more kindness toward it than she did.

Qawoor (not pictured)
The new Priestess of Water who replaced Miz when she married, Qawoor is the youngest priestess of Muldoon and terrified of bugs, so she has a lot of maturing to do if she wants to equal Miz (now that's pretty scary). She is infatuated with Makoto.

Dall Narcis (not pictured)
Majestic with an unhealthy love of self, Dall is the fittingly named Emperor of legendary stature—but only in his mind. His desire for a pretty girl may only be rivaled by his love of the bottle, both vices that seriously impair his judgement. But this is a facade concealing a tortured past.

Gilda (not pictured)
Gilda is the palace guard honcho with the stern face and unflinching attitude, and her jealous reaction to Dall's indiscretions betrays her disregarded feelings for him. She is a skilled swordswoman.

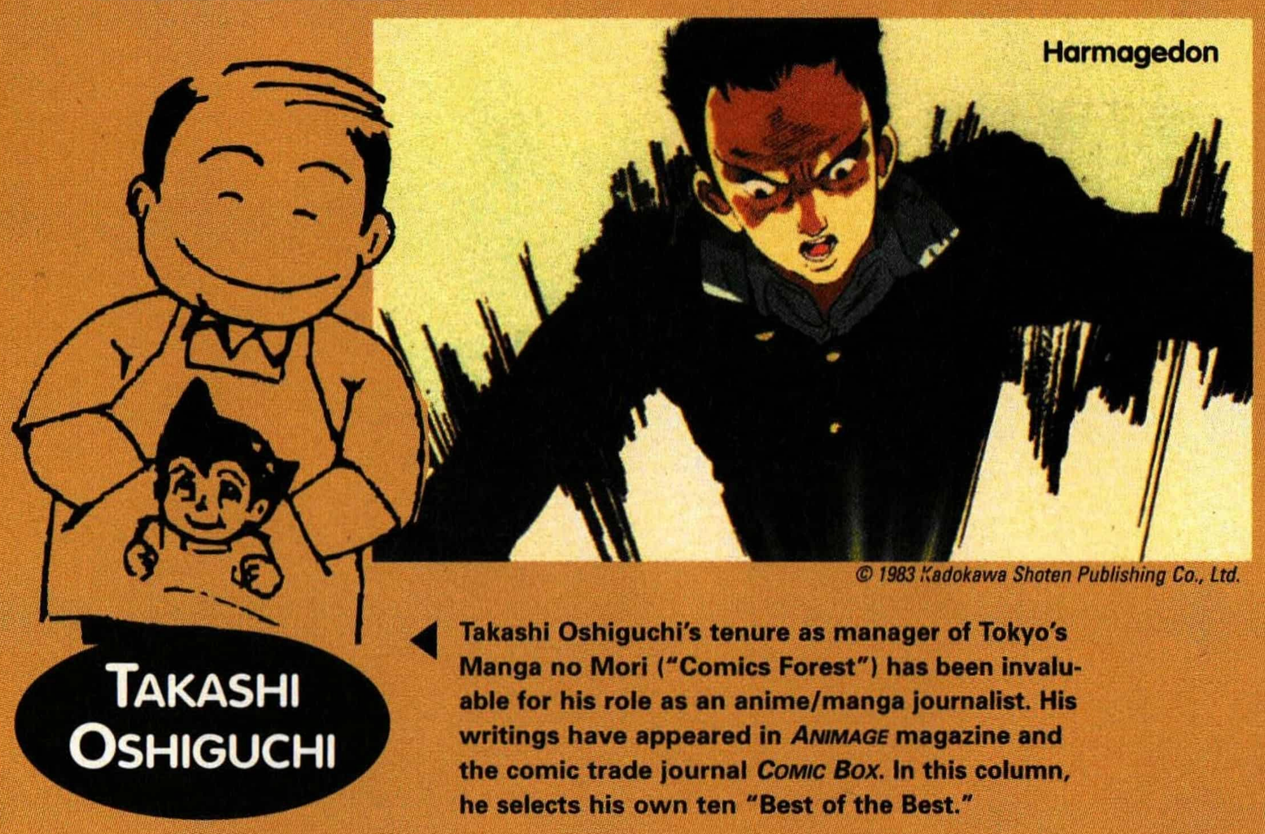
Palnus (not pictured)
As Qawoor's servant, Palnus is apathetic and lazy. He is also the twin brother of Alielle and has as much gumption and chutzpah as she does. The horny twins also share a mutual taste in women; this only serves to aggravate already precarious love triangles. ☆

The saga currently available from Pioneer...

El-Hazard: The Magnificent World (OAV series, 7 parts)
El-Hazard: The Wanderers (TV series, 26 episodes)
El-Hazard 2 (OAV, 4 parts)
El-Hazard: The Alternative World (TV series, 13 episodes)

Best of the Best

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16)



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Takashi Oshiguchi's tenure as manager of Tokyo's Manga no Mori ("Comics Forest") has been invaluable for his role as an anime/manga journalist. His writings have appeared in *ANIMAGE* magazine and the comic trade journal *COMIC BOX*. In this column, he selects his own ten "Best of the Best."

ON THE TEN BEST ANIME IN JAPAN

By **Takashi Oshiguchi**

It's difficult to put some kind of order onto how *much* you like an anime, so I've listed my choices for the best ten anime chronologically, from oldest anime to the most recent.

1. ***Wanpaku Ôji no Orochi Taiji***
("The Bratty Prince's Crusade Against the Giant Snake")
YEAR: 1963
ANIMATION STUDIO: Toei
An anime movie based on Japanese mythology. This was the first anime that allowed me to enjoy the brilliant and exciting experience of animation. The art of Yasuji Mori, who was Hayao Miyazaki's teacher, is spectacular.

2. ***Uchû Patrol Hopper***
("Space Patrol Hopper")
YEAR: 1965
ANIMATION STUDIO: Toei
One of Japan's first TV anime. It's a sci-fi story where a boy from Earth who had an accident in space, is revived as a cyborg with the help of alien technology. This show is thought to have shaped the unique sense of Japanese sci-fi anime with production by Hiroshi Ikeda and character designs by Yasuji Mori. In comparison to other shows of the time such as ***Tetsuwan Atom*** (***Astro Boy***), ***Uchû Shônen Soran*** ("Space Boy Soran"), and ***Tetsujin 28-go*** (***Gigantor***), the finished quality of the show is outstanding. This is because anime movie staff members, from movies such as ***Wanpaku Ôji no Orochi Taiji,*** participated in its production.

3. ***Fight-da!! Pyu-ta***
("Fight! Pyu-ta")
YEAR: 1968
ANIMATION STUDIO: Hôsô Dôga
A masterpiece slapstick anime with a taste of sci-fi. In every episode, an inventor and his grandson have mecha battles with their enemies. The speedy animation was very new and refreshing. The slapstick sense of Hanna-Barbera produced in a Japanese style similar to Tatsunoko's ***Time Bokan*** series which was to come later.

4. ***Mirai Shônen Conan***
("Future Boy Conan")
YEAR: 1978
ANIMATION STUDIO: Nippon Animation
As you all know, this was a television series by Hayao Miyazaki (***My Neighbor Totoro, Kiki's Delivery Service, Princess Mononoke***). It was incredibly entertaining with wonderful characters. Those who watched the entire series to the end were not disappointed. Just the other day, I had a chance to see it again, and it remains a timeless classic.

5. ***Kidô Senshi Gundam***
("Mobile Suit Gundam")
YEAR: 1979
ANIMATION STUDIO: Sunrise
This series revitalized interest in robots and mecha. The mecha, or mobile suits, were extensively used in the show like regular characters, and the characters in the show had overwhelming presence. This show had a profound influence on Japanese anime and manga.

6. ***Jarinko Chie***
YEAR: 1981
ANIMATION STUDIO: TMS
A well-known animated television series by Isao Takahata (***Grave of the Fireflies***). Set in a working-class area, this series depicted the normal everyday life of an energetic girl. Despite the "plain" content, I still find myself watching it over and over again. The manga that it was adapted from was also great, but Isao Takahata's faithful adaptation of it is incredible. Watching this series gives you courage and energy… it's that good.

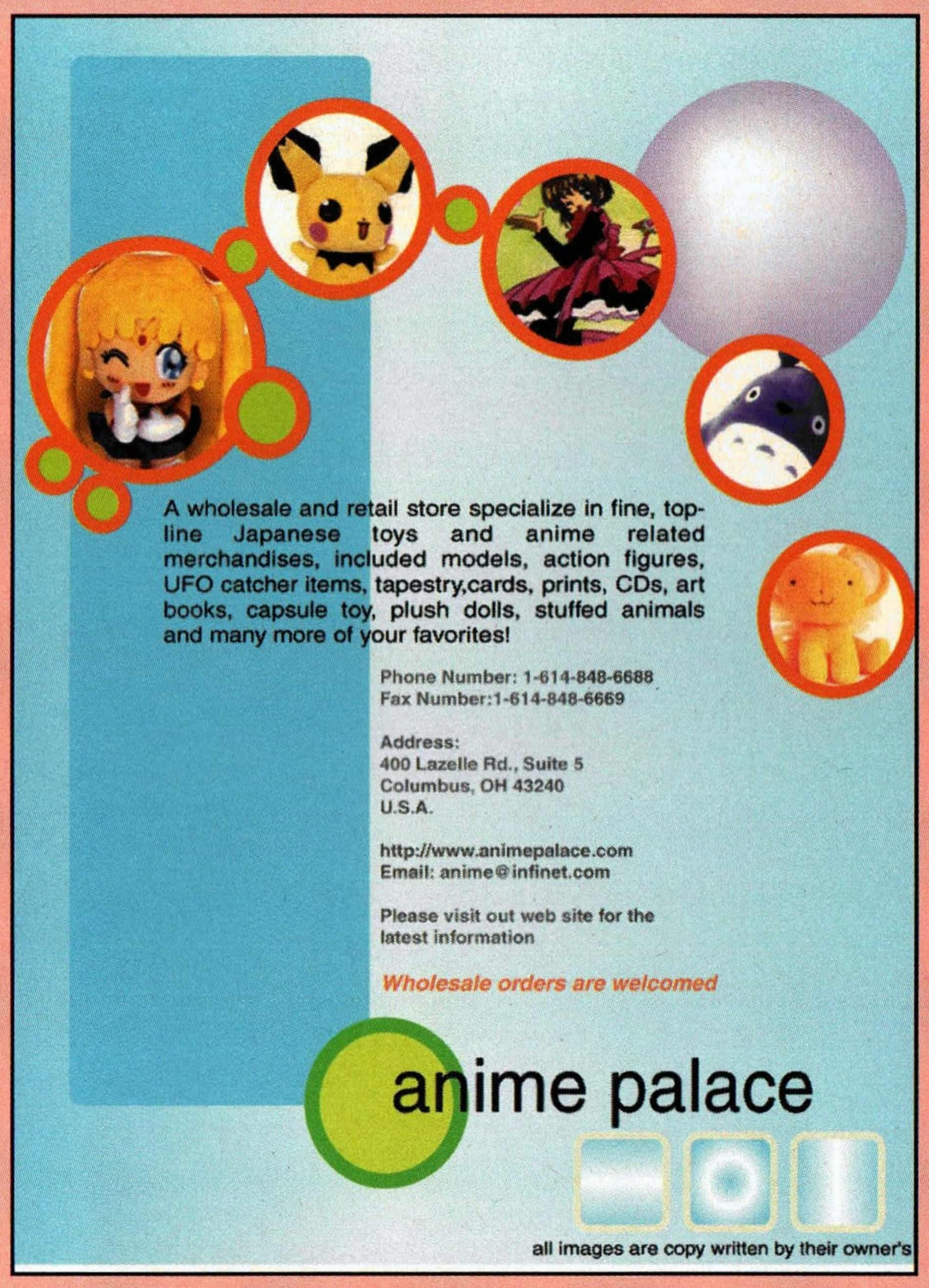
7. ***Genma Taisen*** (***Harmagedon***)
YEAR: 1983
ANIMATION STUDIO: Madhouse
This was the first anime movie that Katsuhiro Otomo (***Akira***) participated in. Otomo's sense of design is magnificent—I was particularly astounded by Vega's asymmetrical design. In addition, the images of the superpowers in real-life cities is impressive. This movie has the keen visual sense that is to be expected from studio Madhouse.

8. ***Urusei Yatsura 2: Beautiful Dreamer***
YEAR: 1984
ANIMATION STUDIO: Toho
Mamoru Oshii's take on ***Urusei Yatsura*** in this second theatrical release bears fruit. It is easy for Japanese to identify with the scenes depicting the *matsuri no mae no baka sawagi* ("the revelry before the festival"), which just about everyone in Japan has experienced. Above all, the activity of Lum's defenders and the speeches of Megane ("glasses") were incredible.

9. ***Honneamise no Tsubasa***
("The Wings of Honneamise")
YEAR: 1987
ANIMATION STUDIO: Gainax
An entire world created for the sake of the drama! Honneamise is a place where everything—history, culture, an economy, currency—was created by the prominent anime creators of the time. Watching it makes you feel like you are traveling in a foreign country. The opening scene with the main character's monologue is particularly moving.

10. ***Kidô Keisatsu Patlabor Gekijô-ban 1***
("Patlabor the Movie 1")
YEAR: 1989
ANIMATION STUDIO: Headgear
An anime drama for adults. The Labor (or mecha) police force is carefully depicted, there are robot battles, and the end is masterfully crafted for a cathartic conclusion. Seeing this made me think that it was possible for Mamoru Oshii to create an anime to his own tastes without disappointing the expectations of anime fans. This is another anime that I watch over and over again.

(MORE BEST OF THE BEST ON PAGE 34)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NEWS

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VIDEO

A.D. POLICE

Can't get enough action set in the world of ***Bubblegum Crisis***? You're in luck—in addition to the ***Bubblegum Crisis: Tokyo 2040*** series, ADV is releasing the ***A.D. Police*** TV series on video starting this January. The A.D. Police are in the hot seat due to a sudden rise in VOOMER incidents (you heard that right—in this series, they're not Boomers but VOOMERS, which is, of course, an acronym meaning VOodoo Organic Metal Extension Resources). Also, there's the matter of one of the A.D. Police's most valuable officers, Kenji Sasaki, whose partners keep turning up dead or seriously injured. With a new partner, Hans Kleif, and one last chance to redeem himself by playing by the rules, Kenji needs to get to the bottom of this techno-mystery and keep the VOOMERS from turning Genom City into a high-tech wasteland. ***A.D. Police*** *from ADV Films: on sale 23 January; English VHS; 75 mins.; US$19.98.* ☆

VIDEO

SAILOR MOON

More ***Sailor Moon*** on video means more happy Moonies, and this February brings not one, but *two* new sets of video releases. Pioneer is getting ready to roll out the first two volumes of ***Sailor Moon S*** (the third ***Sailor Moon*** series, by the Japanese counting) on English VHS in the edited version as seen on the Cartoon Network, and also on uncut English-dubbed and -subtitled formats, plus a bilingual DVD (unedited) that will contain all of the episodes included on *both* of the first two VHS volumes. To round off this deluxe presentation, Pioneer is commissioning brand-new box-cover art from Toei Animation in Japan! Meanwhile, ADV Films will release the as-seen-on-the-Cartoon Network versions of the first ***Sailor Moon*** series on English VHS tapes, starting right from the beginning of the story, including episodes that have never previously been released to tape in the U.S.! ***Sailor Moon S*** *from Pioneer; on sale in February; English VHS/Subtitled VHS/Bilingual DVD; 90 mins. (VHS)/160 mins. (DVD); US$14.98/$14.98/$29.98 each.* •
Sailor Moon *from ADV Films: on sale in February; English VHS; 100 mins.; US$12.98 each.* ☆

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VIDEO

NIGHT WALKER

No, it's not what you think—he's a vampire! Vampire detective Shido keeps the streets safe from supernatural scum. With a beautiful, impetuous policewoman hot on his trail, he races to solve the secrets of his fellow Nightbreed—before city life goes straight to hell! Animation production is by AIC (***Tenchi Muyô!, Bubblegum Crisis: Tokyo 2040***). ***Night Walker: Midnight Detective*** *from U.S. Manga Corps: on sale 9 January; English VHS; 100 mins.; US$19.99.* ☆

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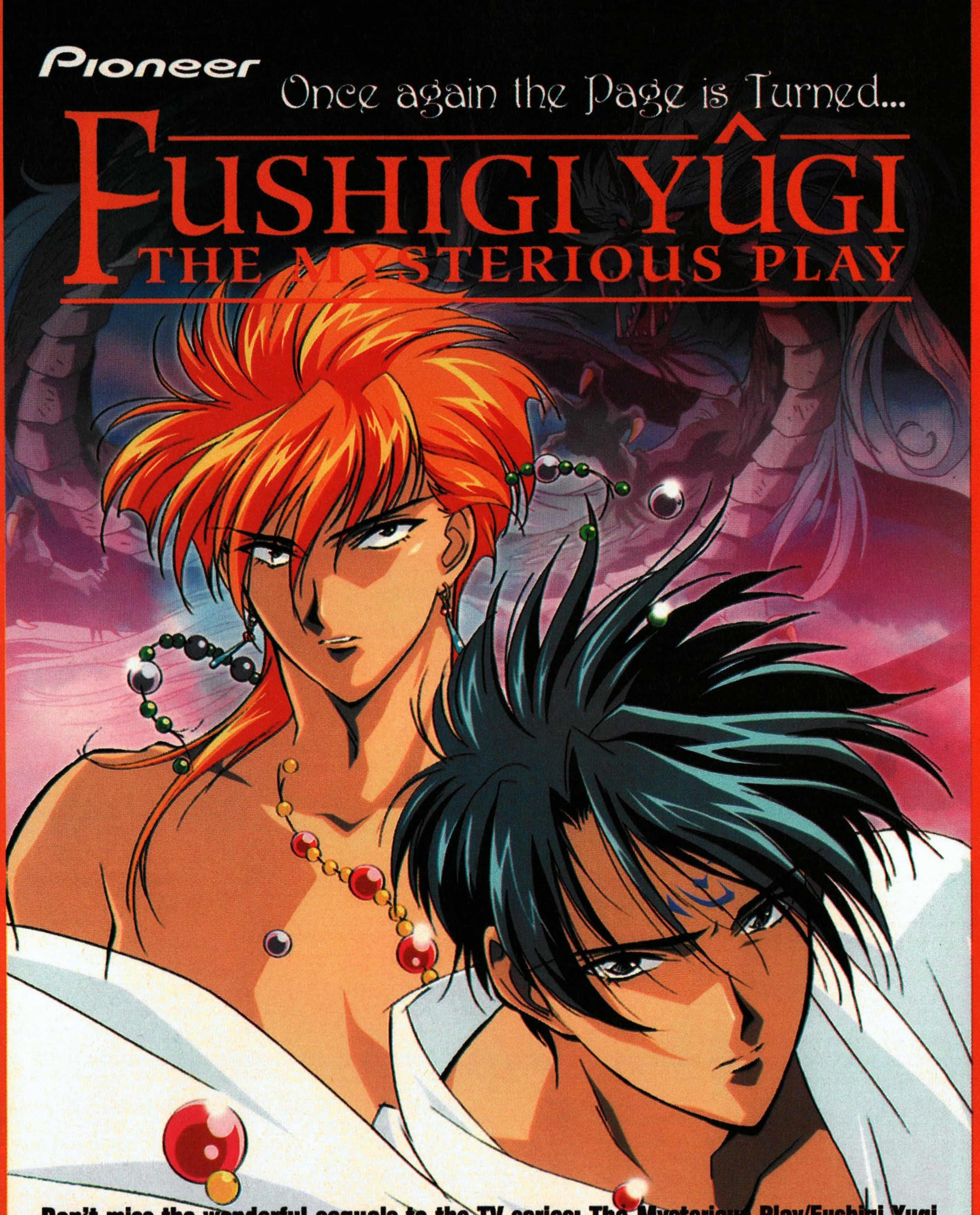
Once again the Page is Turned...

FUSHIGI YÛGI
THE MYSTERIOUS PLAY



Don't miss the wonderful sequels to the TV series: The Mysterious Play/Fushigi Yugi

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SUGGESTED 13 UP

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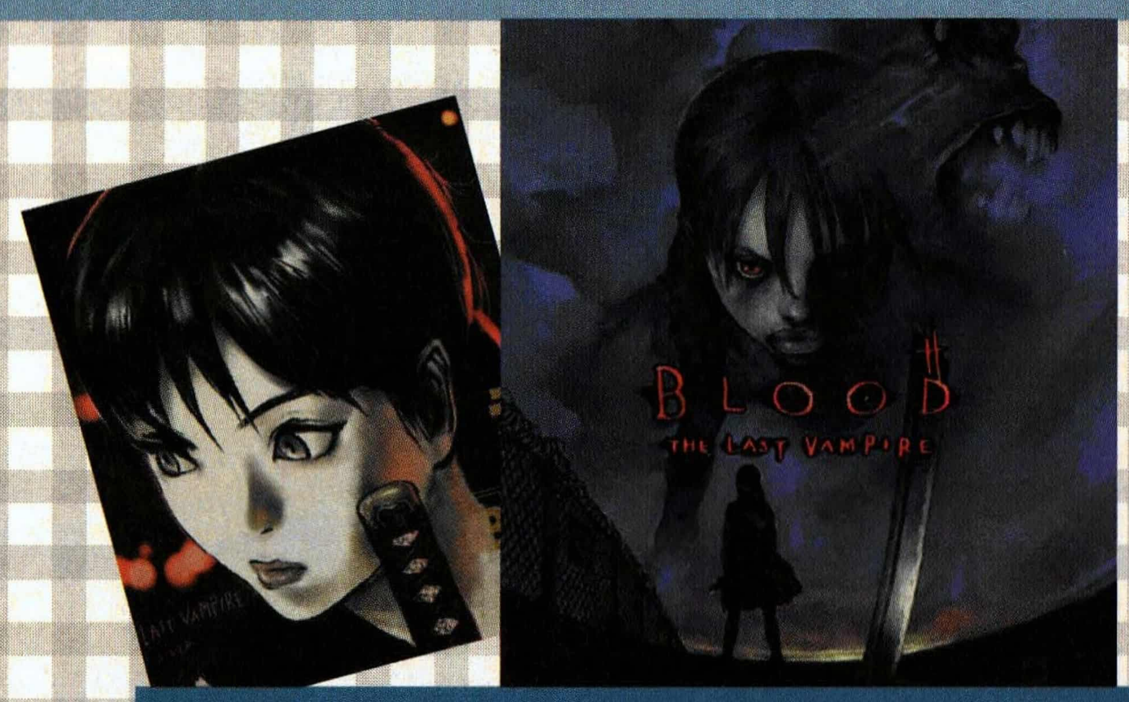
VIDEO

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA

Based on the video game (known as ***Street Fighter Zero*** in Japan), this story takes place somewhere between the ***Street Fighter II V*** TV series and ***Street Fighter: The Animated Movie***. Ryu is at the point in his training where he is having trouble controlling the powerful *hadôken*. Suddenly, a young boy boy named Jun appears claiming to be his younger brother! It turns out that Ryu's own berserker fury is what is interfering with powers, and the boy seems to have the same problem. Then there's also the mysterious evil figure known as Gouki, who seems to be the *cause* of these sudden bursts of rage. Look forward to seeing more new characters from the ***Alpha*** game series such as Sakura, Rose, and Dan, and well as all the familiar faces from classic ***Street Fighter***. Also be on the lookout for the ***Street Fighter II V*** series to start releasing on DVD on 27 February. ***Street Fighter Alpha*** *from Manga Entertainment; on sale 30 January; English VHS/Subtitled VHS/Bilingual DVD; 90 mins.; US$19.95/$29.95/$29.95* • ***Street Fighter II V*** *from Manga Entertainment: on sale 27 February; Bilingual DVD; look to* ANIMERICA *for more information as it becomes available.* ☆



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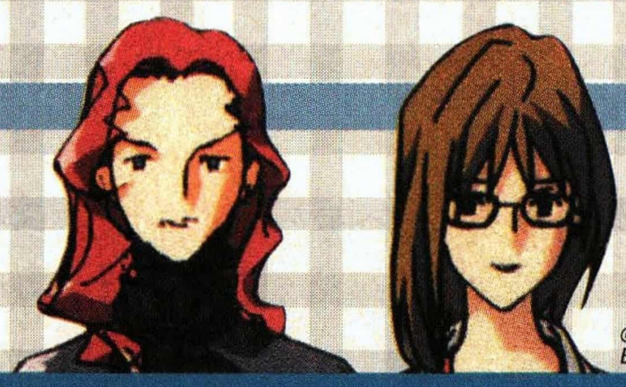
MOVIE

BLOOD:THE LAST VAMPIRE

Although the film itself has already been shown at film festivals in both the U.S. and Canada, Japanese audiences have yet to see more of Production I.G's new digital anime, ***Blood: The Last Vampire*** than these character designs by Katsuya Terada. Terada is a manga artist and an illustrator who has worked on projects such as the video game ***Virtua Fighter***, character designs for the movie ***Zeiram***, and the CG manga ***Saiyuki-den Ôzaruô*** ("The Legend of Saiyuki: The Great Monkey King"). Terada's designs for ***Blood*** were done according to the image that director Hiroyuki Kitakubo (***Golden Boy***)—who told *NEWTYPE* magazine that he'd always wanted to work with Terada—had in his head. ***Blood: The Last Vampire****: scheduled for release in Japanese theaters this fall; look to* ANIMERICA *for more information as it becomes available.* ☆

WHAT'S NEW IN JAPAN?



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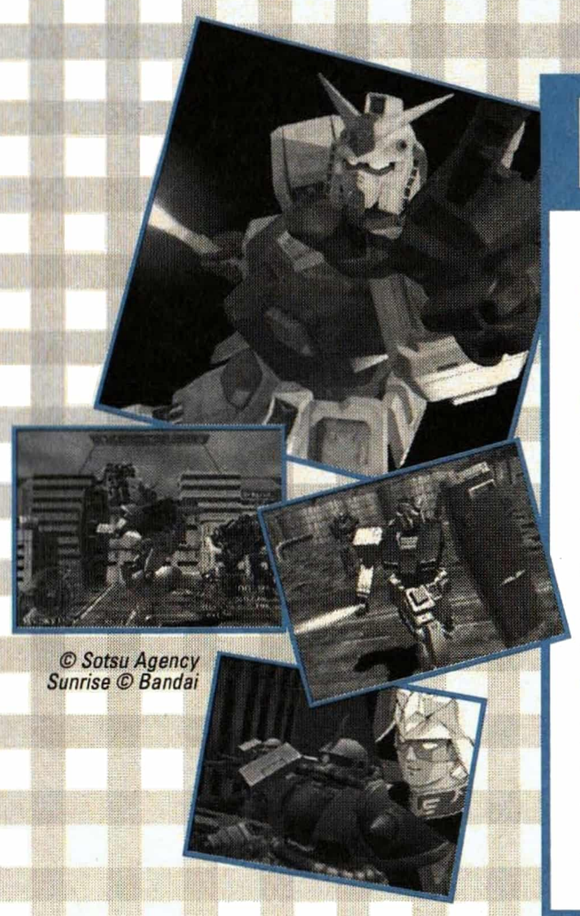
TV　アルジェントソーマ

ARGENTO SOMA

Set in the year 2059, ***Argento Soma*** depicts the near future not as completely foreign, but as a place where technology has advanced, but society and culture have remained fundamentally the same. But of course new inventions and technological developments have had an effect on society—manned space exploration has been developed by a scientist named Tact, and humanity hopes to increase its territory in space. But then the sudden appearance of aliens in 2054 puts a stop to space exploration and starts a war between the aliens and the Earth. An international force called Funeral is formed to combat the aliens. Hoping to utilize the alien technology, Funeral experiments with reconstructing an alien mecha from spare parts. During the experimental project called EX-1, this mecha is revived and the machine is found to be sentient. Called "Frank," the machine has components that are very similar to human's anatomical parts, with flexible metal muscles, healing ability, and a complex electrical pulse network that functions as nerves. Although Frank is made of metal, he fulfills all the conditions for being a biological lifeform, and when a girl named Harriet is found to have the ability to communicate with Frank, he becomes a valuable ally in the fight against the aliens. And since Frank has been modified from his original design, his powers surpass those of the aliens, and his full potential yet remains a mystery. ***Argento Soma:*** *on-air in Japan Thurdays at 1:15 a.m. on TV Tokyo.* ☆

NEWS

WHAT'S NEW IN JAPAN?



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GAME 機動戦士ガンダム

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM

You know it wouldn't take long—Bandai will be rolling out the first ***Kidô Senshi*** ("Mobile Suit") ***Gundam*** game for the PlayStation 2 this winter, and as you'd expect, the graphics look better than ever, with realistic mobile suits and environments that could almost pass for live-action! Multiple mobile suits can appear on screen at the same time, and as you fight various characters from the series (wreaking havoc across a realistically detailed city environment), you have to maintain communication with your allies, such as the mobile suit carrier *White Base*, and the Guntank and Guncannon mobile suits. The opening sequence shows a rare look at ***Gundam*** from the Zeon's perspective. Check out http://www.gundam.channel.or.jp/ps2g/ to see images from the game! ***Kidô Senshi Gundam*** *from Bandai for the PlayStation 2: scheduled for release in December 2000.* ☆

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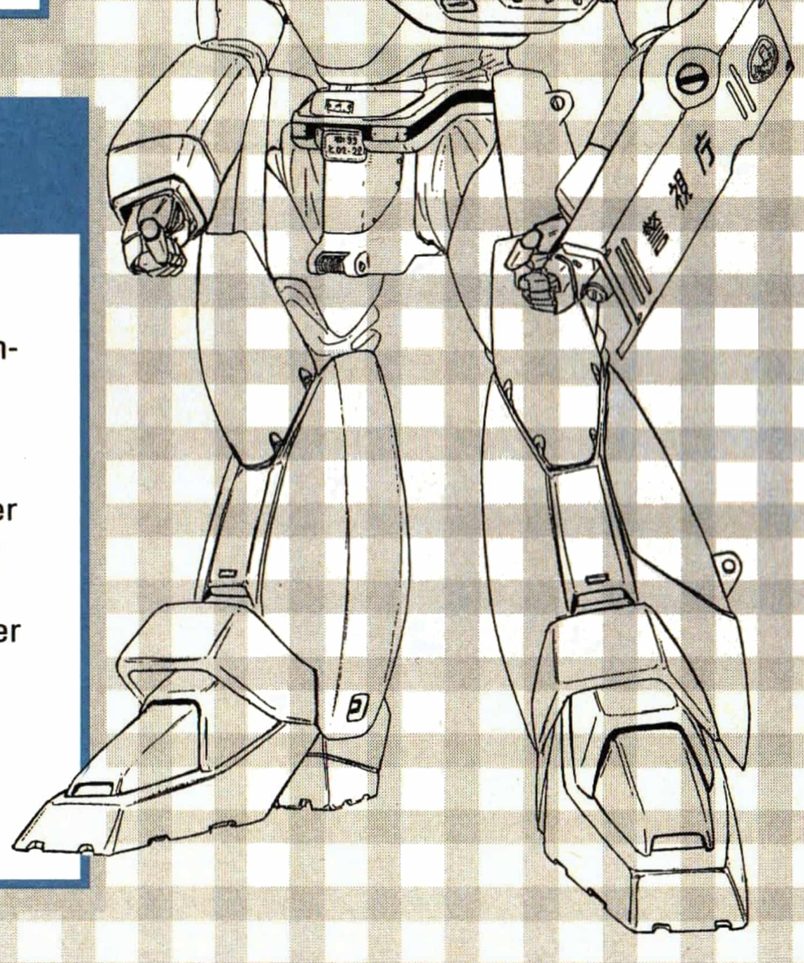
GAME 機動警察パトレイバー

MOBILE POLICE PATLABOR

Have you got the right stuff? Then sign on as the newest member of Metro Police Special Vehicle Section 2, Unit 2 as the pilot of the Ingram 3 in a new butt-kicking game based on ***Kidô Keisatsu Patlabor*** ("Mobile Police Patlabor"). Another rookie named Midori Karatani acts as your ground support as you either play out the drama and the comedy of the characters of the SV2 in Adventure mode; use the Ingram 3 to fight for justice and defeat the bad guys in Action mode; or let loose your itchy trigger finger just like Isao Ota in Shooting mode. The story is detailed enough to satisfy veteran ***Patlabor*** fans, yet understandable to those not familiar with the anime or manga. ***Kidô Keisatsu Patlabor Game Edition*** *from Bandai Visual for the PlayStation 1: on sale now; ¥6800.* ☆



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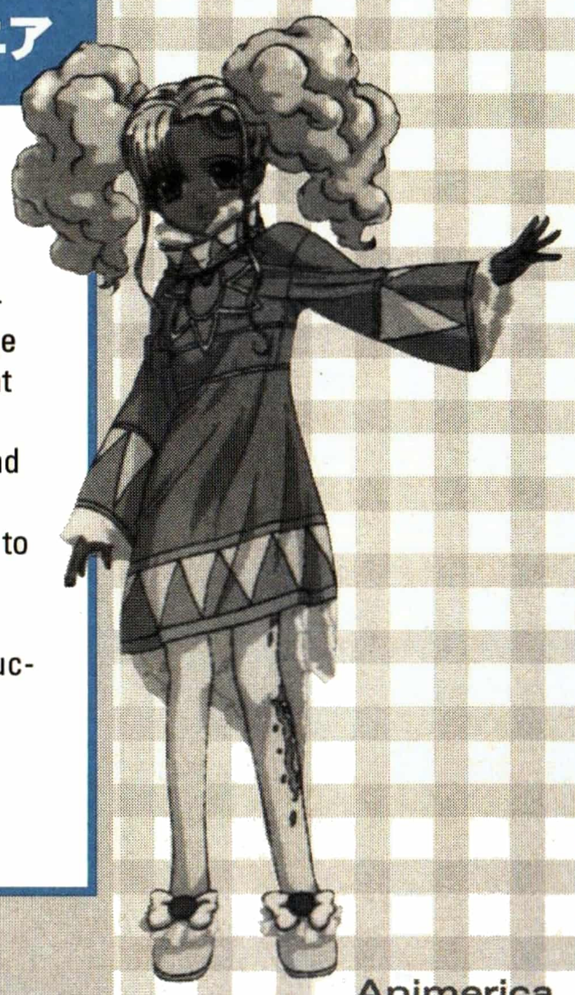
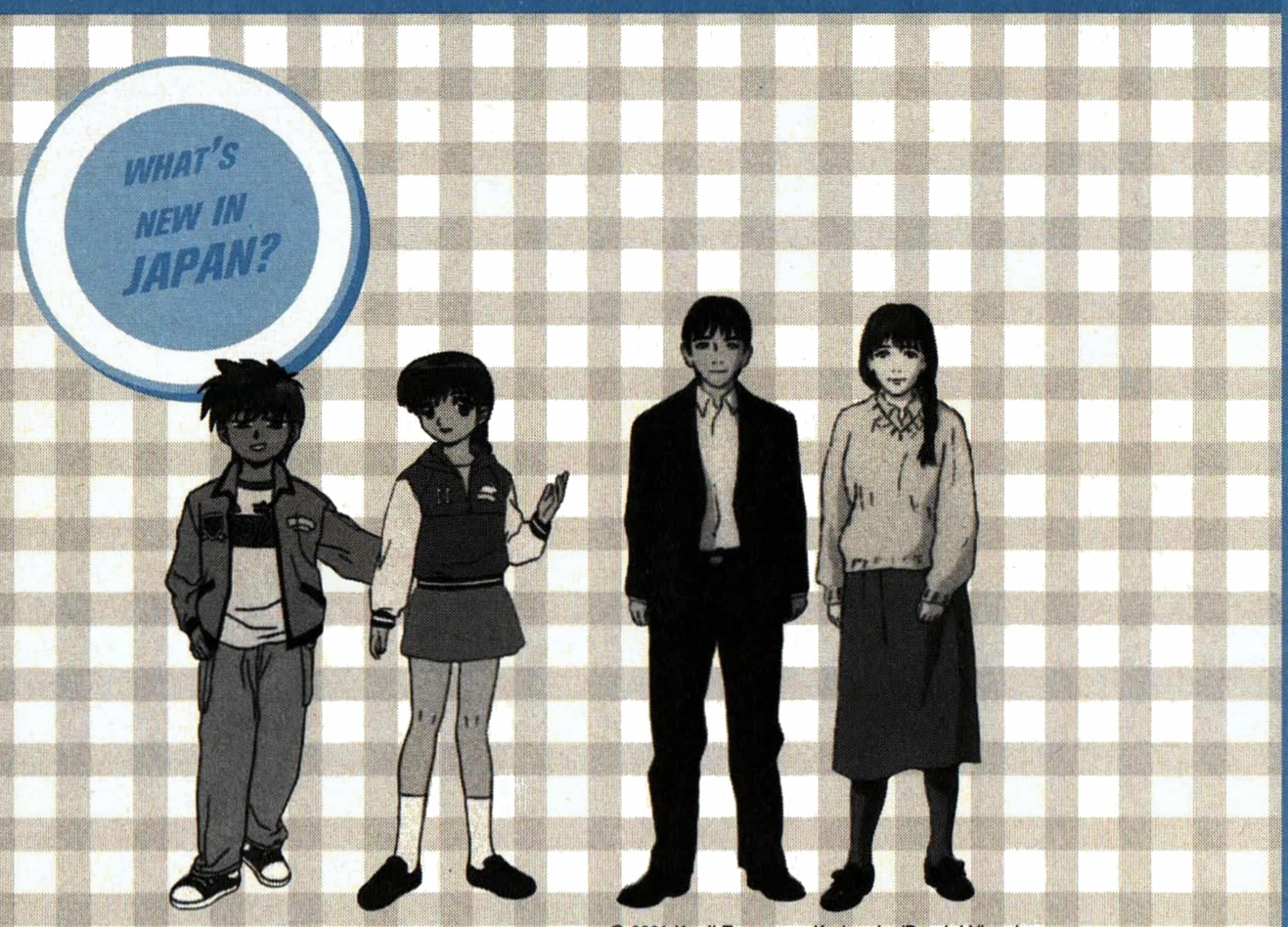
TV テイルズ・オブ・エターニア

TALES OF ETERNIA

Tales of Eternia for the PlayStation, the third in the ***Tales of Phantasia*** RPG series from Namco, is to be adapted into an animated TV series. Infalia and Celestia are two lands that worship different gods. The two lands went to war, and all exchange between the two lands has ceased. Now a crisis has arisen that could mean ruin to both. On the outskirts of Infalia, three friends—18-year-old Rid Hershel, 17-year-old Farah Oersted, and 17-year-old Keel Zeibel—encounter a girl named Meredy from Celestia. She tells them that both Infalia and Celestia are about to face a disaster called "The Great Fall," and she has come to Infalia to stop this disaster from happening. Rid and the others join Meredy in her mission. Will they succeed? Animation production for ***Tales of Eternia*** is by XEBEC and Production I.G., with direction by Shigeru Ueda, and series structure and script by Hiroyuki Kawazaki. ***Tales of Eternia:*** *on-air in Japan starting January 2001 on WOWOW satellite channel.* ☆





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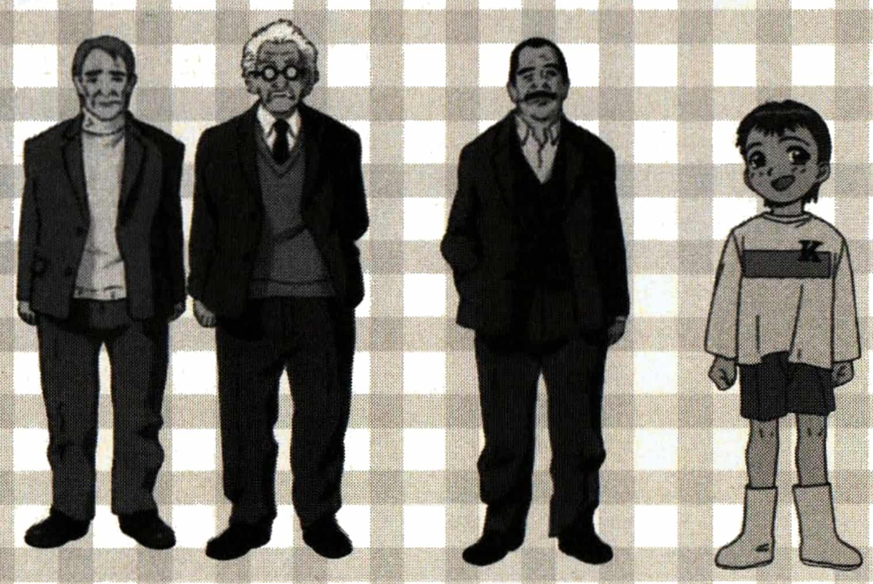
VIDEO 少年科学倶楽部

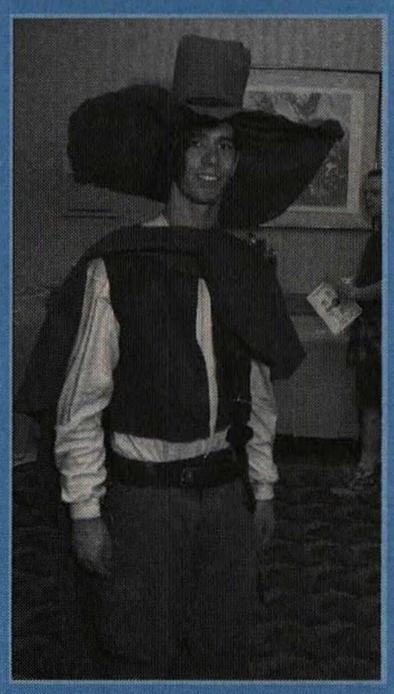
SPIRIT OF WONDER: SHÔNEN KAGAKU CLUB

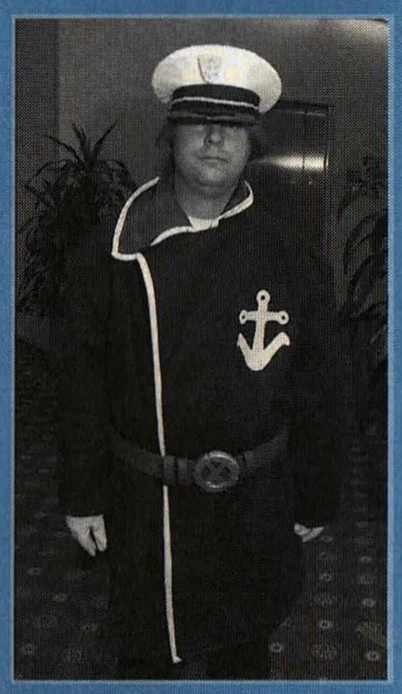
Kenji Tsuruta's manga short-story collection ***The Spirit of Wonder*** is to be adapted once more into an animated video series. First published in Kodansha's *AFTERNOON* magazine, and translated into English by Studio Proteus (published by Dark Horse Comics), ***Spirit of Wonder*** was previously animated as the ***China-san no Yu'utsu*** ("The Melancholy of Miss China"), which was released in both English-dubbed and -subtitled formats in North America through AnimEigo. Now the ***Shônen Kagaku Club*** ("Young Science Club") story will also become an original video. A girl named Wendy who lives in the country reads about the "Ether Theory," which states that just as sound waves cause vibrations in the air, transmitting sound, in space, light causes vibrations in the material called "ether" which results in the transmittal of light. In other words, currents exist in ether similar to the way currents exist in the air. Nonsensically postulating from this, flight is possible utilizing ether currents just as airplanes fly in air. The members of the 50-year-old Shônen Kagaku Club, consisting of such old men such as Cooper, Shepard, and Wendy's father Gordon, believe in the Ether Theory and dream of using it to fly to Mars! Direction and storyboards for this video series are by Takashi Anno, with character designs by Yoshiaki Yanagida, and animation direction by Yoshiaki Yanagida and Masayuki Sekine. ***The Spirit of Wonder: Shônen Kagaku Club*** *from Bandai Visual: 2-volume OAV series; on sale January 2001.* ☆

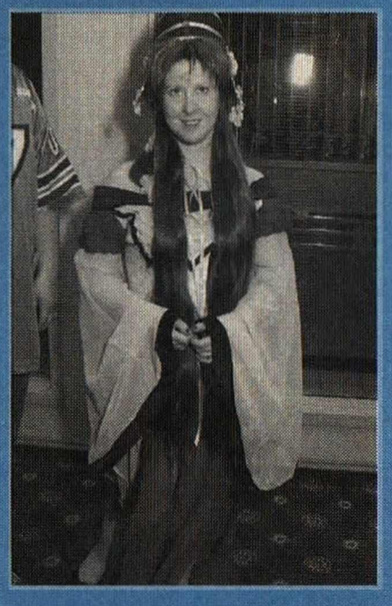


CONVENTION UPDATE

Costume photos from Neko-con and Nan Desu Kon by Kevin Lillard (www.fansview.com)

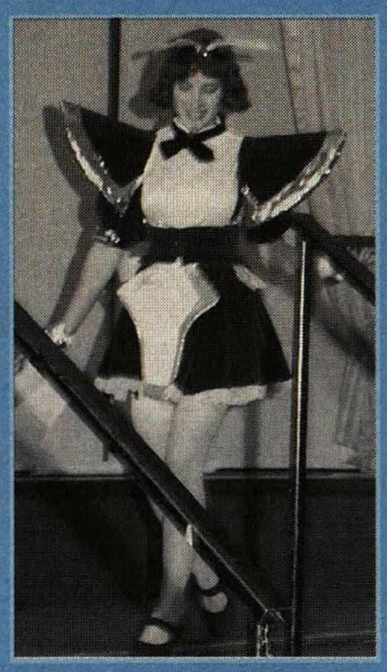


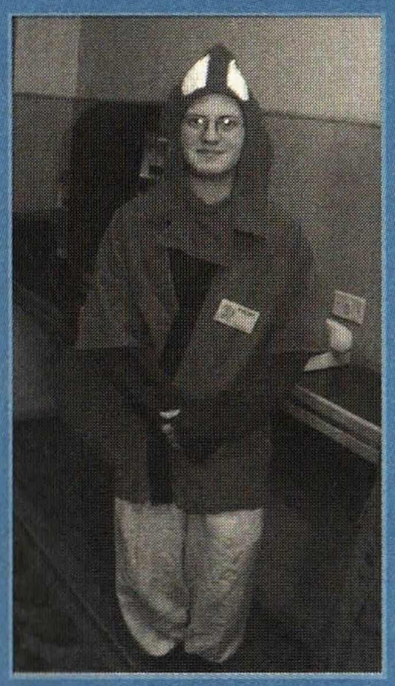




NEWS

For things to buy and see, friends to meet, connections to make, there's no better place than an anime convention! Check here for one happening in your area.





JANUARY 2001 - JULY 2001

26-28 January • Ohayo-Con
Location: Sheraton Airport Hotel, Cleveland, OH
Guests: Steve Bennett, Michael Brady, Izzy Burger, Jessica Calvello, Juliet Cesario, Robert DeJesus, Anna Exeter, Scott Fraizer, Michael Granberry, Tiffany Grant, Jei Fubler Harvey, Tomochiro Hirata, Neil Nadleman, Atsuko Nakajima, Scott Simpson, Kazuko Tadano, Brett Weaver
Membership Rates: US30 before 31 December; $35 at the door
Hotel Prices: US$75 (single~quad)
E-mail: (registration) section9@japan.com
Web Site: www.ohayocon.com

16-18 February • Katsucon
Location: Crystal City Hyatt Regency, Arlington, VA
Guests: Steve Bennett, Jessica Calvello, Newton Ewell, Scott Fraizer, Shinya Hasegawa, Amy Howard, Shin Kurokawa, Lea Hernandez, Mark Rogers, SanKnights
Membership Rates: US$45 at the door
Hotel Prices: US$99/night (single~quad); call (703) 418-1234 for reservations, mention Katsucon for special rate
Address: Katsucon Entertainment, Inc., P.O. Box 577, Dumfries, VA 22026
Phone: (703) 624-6527
E-mail: katsucon@katsucon.com
Web Site: www.katsucon.com

30 March-1 April • FanimeCon
Location: Westin Hotel and Convention Center, Santa Clara, CA
Guests: Steve R. Bennett IV, Mari Iijima, Gilles Poitras, Stan Sakai, Fred Schodt, Doug Smith, Adam Warren
Membership Rates: US$35 until 28 February, $45 at the door ($24/ day)
Hotel Prices: TBA
Address: Fanime, P.O. Box 8068, San Jose, CA 95155
E-mail: info@fanime.com
Web Site: www.fanime.com

27-29 April • Sakura Con 2001
Location: Holiday Inn and Convention Center, Everett, WA
Guests: Lia Sargent
Membership Rates: US$40 until 31 March; US$45 at the door
Hotel Prices: Call (425) 337-2900 for reservations
Address: Sakura Con 2001, 900 Meridian Avenue East, #19-407, Milton, WA 98354-7019
Phone: (253) 503-2233 x1675
E-mail: sakuraweb@hotmail.com
Web Site: www.sakuracon.com

11-13 May • Anime Central
Location: Sheraton Arlington Park, Arlington Heights, IL
Guests: Yoshitoshi Abe, Kia Asamiya, Robert DeJesus, Scott Frazier
Membership Rates: US$35 until 19 February; $40 until 6 April; $45 at the door
Hotel Prices: US$89 (single-quad), upgrades available; Call (800) 344-3434 or (847) 394-2000 for reservations, mention Anime Central for special rate (before 8 April)
Address: Anime Central, 119 South Emerson St. Suite 231, Mount Prospect, IL 60056-3296
E-mail: acenreg@acen.org
Web Site: www.acen.org

25-27 May • Anime North
Location: Toronto Airport Marriott Hotel, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Guests: Steve Bennett, Ben Dunn, Doug Smith
Membership Rates: $30CAN by 9 April; $40 at the door
Address: Anime North, c/o 180 Columbia Drive, Hamilton, Ontario L9C 3Y6, Canada
E-mail: registration@animenorth.com
Web Site: www.animenorth.com

25-27 May • Animazement
Location: Sheraton Imperial Hotel & Convention Center, Durham, NC
Guests: TBA
Membership Rates: US$40 by 1 March; $45 by 1 May
Hotel Prices: US$85; call (919) 941-5050 or (800)-325-3535 for reservations
E-mail: maxwellj@ipass.net
Web Site: www.animazement.org

25-28 May • Balticon 35
Location: Baltimore Omni Inner Harbor Hotel, Baltimore, MD
Guests: Hal Clement, Kara Dennison, Halla Fleischer, Frank Hayes
Membership Rates: US$35 by 31 January; $40 by 30 April; $45 at the door
Hotel Prices: US$119 (single-quad); call (410) 752-1100 for reservations
Address: Balticon 35, P.O. Box 686, Baltimore, MD 21203-0686
Phone: (410) JOE-BSFS (563-2737)
E-mail: bsfs@balticon.org
Web Site: www.balticon.org

1-3 June • Project A-Kon XII
Location: Westin Park Central & Sheraton Park Central, Dallas, TX
Guests: Will Allison, Steve Bennett, Jessica Calvello, Doug Dlin, Lee Duhlig , Pat Duke, Ben Dunn, Joe Dunn, Newton Ewell, Matthew High, Nathan Lumm, Eddie Perkins, Fred Perry, Paul Riddell , Joe Rosales, Diana X. Sprinkle, Jochen Weltjens, Mel White, Joe Wight, Elin Winkler
Membership Rates: US$32 preregistered
Hotel Prices: Westin Park Central: US$100/night (single/double/triple/quad) or higher for deluxe rooms/suites; Sheraton Park Central: US$90/night (single/double/triple/quad), call 1-800-WEST-IN for reservations (for either hotel), must mention special con rate
Address: Phoenix Entertainment, 3352 Broadway Blvd. Suite 470, Garland, TX 75043
Fax: (972) 926-1527
E-mail: info@a-kon.com
Web Site: www.a-kon.com

15-17 June • Anime Mid-Atlantic
Location: Holiday Inn Select/Koger South Conference Center, Richmond, VA
Guests: Steve Bennett, Austell Callwood, Colleen Doran, Steve Pearl, Doug Smith, John and Jason Waltrip
Membership Rates: US$25 by 25 May
Hotel Prices: US$84; call (804) 379-2763 or (800) 804-7380 for reservations; mention Anime Mid-Atlantic for special rate
Address: Anime Mid-Atlantic, P.O. Box 2636, Glen Allen, VA 23060
Web Site: www.animemidatlantic.com

5 July-8 July • Anime Expo
Location: Long Beach Convention Center, Long Beach Hyatt Hotel, Long Beach Westin Hotel, Long Beach, CA
Guests: TBA
Membership Rates: US$45 until 1 April; $50 at the door
Hotel Prices: US$135-$160 per night (Hyatt Regency)/$119/$139 (Westin). Call (562) 491-1234 (Hyatt) or (562) 436-3000 (Westin) for reservations; mention Anime Expo for special room rate.
E-mail: reg@anime-expo.org
Web Site: www.anime-expo.org

TV UPDATE

KIDS' WB www.kidswb.com
Pokémon airs every weekday in national syndication on the WB Network's Kids' WB. On the Kids' WB Saturday morning block, look for more ***Pokémon*** and ***Cardcaptors***.

FOX KIDS www.foxkids.com
On the Fox Network's Fox Kids block, look for ***Digimon***, ***Monster Rancher***, weekdays and Saturdays, and ***Flint the Time Detective*** on Saturday mornings.

CARTOON NETWORK www.cartoonnetwork.com
The Cartoon Network's anime showcase Toonami airs weekdays and Saturdays and currently features ***Dragon Ball Z***, ***Gundam Wing***, ***Sailor Moon***, ***Tenchi Muyô!*** and ***Blue Submarine No. 6***.

CINEMAX www.cinemax.com
This cable movie channel shows a variety of anime at midnight; check your local listings for details.

ENCORE'S ACTION CHANNEL http://action.encoremedia.com
This cable channel airs anime, including complete series, on a rotating basis.

FOX FAMILY CHANNEL www.foxkids.com
The channel's Sunday morning Anime Invasion block airs ***Megaman***, ***Monster Rancher***, and ***Digimon***.

INSPIRATION NETWORK www.insp.com
The religious cable channel INSP (based in Charlotte, NC) carries the anime series ***Little Women*** at 4:30 pm (ET) on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. Tuesdays feature ***Tom Sawyer*** at 4:00 pm (ET) and ***Little Women*** at 4:30 pm (ET).

INTERNATIONAL CHANNEL www.i-channel.com
This cable station airs ***Armored Trooper Votoms***, ***Irresponsible Captain Tylor***, and (unedited) ***Dragon Ball Z***.

INDEPENDENT FILM CHANNEL www.ifctv.com
This independent film showcase airs various anime titles on a rotating basis.

SCI-FI CHANNEL www.scifi.com
USA Networks' Sci-Fi Channel has discontinued its "Saturday Anime" lineup for the time being, but keep your eyes on channel listings for anime festivals and special showings.

TELEMUNDO www.telemundo.com
Dragon Ball Z airs in Spanish on Telemundo. Check your local listings for dates and times.

TOON DISNEY www.disney.go.com/disneychannel/toondisney
The cable station Toon Disney lists ***Hello Kitty*** daily at 6:30 am ET (we've had reports that it's actually broadcast at 6:50 am).

TRINITY NETWORK www.tbn.org
Subscribers to this Christian cable network can find classic family anime series such as ***Flying House*** and ***Super Book*** on Saturday mornings at 6:30 and 7:00 am (ET), respectively.

LOCAL TV
Various independent U.S. TV stations air anime programs. The San Jose Public Broadcasting station KTEH-54 (**www.kteh.org**) airs anime between 10:00 and 11:00 pm (PT) on Sunday nights; check your local listings for details.

If your local channel airs anime, write to us and let us know so we can add it to this section. (Please include the city and the station's call letters.)

anime RADAR NEWS

JAPAN'S BESTSELLING MANGA

The bestselling comics, compiled by Books Nippan, Japan (based on sales figures as of 8/31/00)

1. ***X • 15***
   Clamp • Kadokawa Shoten • ¥400
2. ***Fruits Basket • 6***
   Natsuki Takaya • Hakusensha • ¥390
3. ***Inu-Yasha • 17***
   Rumiko Takahashi • Shogakukan • ¥390
4. ***Card Captor Sakura • 12***
   Clamp • Kodansha • ¥400
5. ***Hanazakari no Kimitachi e • 12***
   ("To the Blooming Generation")
   Hisaya Chugo • Hakusensha • ¥390
6. ***Hikaru no Go • 8***
   ("Go Master Hikaru")
   Yumi Hotta and Takeshi Kobata • Shueisha • ¥390
7. ***Kamikaze Kaitô Jeanne • 7***
   ("Kamikaze Thief Jeanne")
   Arina Tanemura • Shueisha • ¥390
8. ***Peach Girl • 8***
   Miwa Ueda • Kodansha • ¥390
9. ***Kashiramoji D • 19***
   ("Initial D")
   Shuichi Shigeno • Kodansha • ¥505
10. ***Haruka naru Jikû no Naka de***
    ("In the Happy Time")
    Ruby Party and Toko Mizuno • Hakusensha • ¥390

X

フルーツバスケット

犬夜叉

カードキャプターさくら

花ざかりの君たちへ

ヒカルの碁

神風怪盗ジャンヌ

ピーチガール

頭文字D

遥かなる時空の中で

JAPAN'S BESTSELLING ANIME

The bestselling animated videos (on DVD), compiled by Original Confidence Research Company (as of 9/4/00)

1. ***Love Hina • Process 1***
   King Record • ¥5500
2. ***Furi Kuri • Vol. 3***
   King Record • ¥3700
3. ***Mugen no Ryvius! • Vol.***
   ("Infinite Ryvius")
   Bandai Visual • ¥6300
4. ***Single Animation Kotetsu Tenshi Kurumi • Vol. 2***
   ("Single Animation Steel Angel Kurumi")
   Pony Canyon • ¥1500
5. ***Shin Kidô Senki Gundam W DVD Collection 3***
   ("New Mobile War Chronicle GUNDAM WING")
   Bandai Visual • ¥18,000
6. ***Seikai no Dansho: Tanjô***
   ("Quotation of the Stars: Birth")
   Bandai Visual • ¥3800
7. ***Betterman• Vol. 13***
   JVC • ¥5800
8. ***Yûsha-Ô Gaogaigâ Final • Vol. 3***
   KING OF BRAVES GAOGAIGAR FINAL
   Victor • ¥5800
9. ***"Turn A" Gundam • Vol. 9***
   Bandai Visual • ¥7800
10. ***Denshin Mamotte Shugo Getten • Vol. 2***
    ("Guardian Angel Moon")
    Movic • ¥5800

ラブひな

フリクリ

無限のリヴァイアス

鋼鉄天使くるみ

新機動戦記ガンダムW

星界の断章

ベターマン

勇者王ガオガイガーFINAL

∀ガンダム

伝心　まもって守護月天!

AMERICA'S BESTSELLING MANGA

Based on preorders compiled by Diamond Distribution company (during the month of November 2000)

1. ***Sailor Moon #26***
   Naoko Takeuchi • TokyoPop • US$2.95
2. ***Dragon Ball Z Part 3, #10***
   Akira Toriyama • Viz Comics • US$2.95
3. ***Oh My Goddess!: Queen Sayoko #3***
   Kosuke Fujishima • Dark Horse Comics • US$3.50
4. ***Dragon Ball Part 3, #6***
   Akira Toriyama • Viz Comics • US$2.95
5. ***Gundam Wing #9***
   Koichi Tokita • TokyoPop • US$2.95

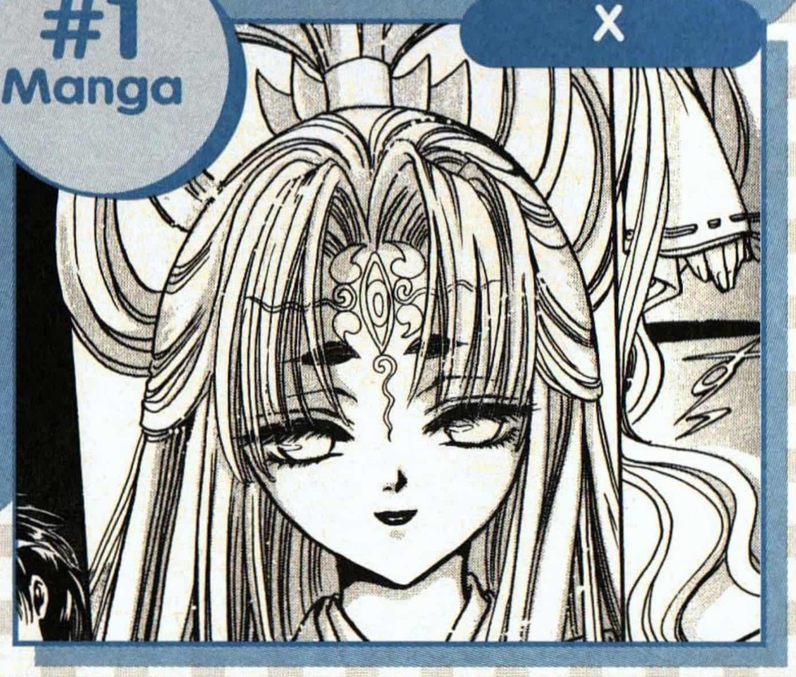
AMERICA'S BESTSELLING ANIME

Based on preorders compiled by Diamond Distribution Company (during the month of November 2000)

1. ***Gundam Wing Vol. 7: Home Fires***
   [English VHS, uncut]
   Bandai • US$14.98
2. ***Gundam Wing Vol. 6: Heroes Betrayed***
   [English VHS, uncut]
   Bandai • US$14.98
3. ***Bubblegum Crisis Tokyo 2040 • Vol. 9: Kill Zone***
   [English VHS]
   ADV Films • US$19.98
4. ***Samurai X/Rurouni Kenshin • OVA Vol. 2: Betrayal***
   [English VHS]
   ADV Films • US$19.98
5. ***Escaflowne • Vol. 2: Betrayal and Trust***
   [English VHS]
   Bandai • US$14.98

#1 Manga

X



All info is as accurate and timely as possible; however, last-minute changes do occur. Some titles are available earlier when ordered directly from their U.S. manufacturer. Unless other languages are noted, "bilingual" refers to English and Japanese audio tracks.

DOMESTIC ANIME RELEASES

DECEMBER 2000

12/5 Bubblegum Crisis: Tokyo 2040 • Vol. 10: Burning Metal
[English VHS/Subtitled VHS]
ADV Films • US$19.98/$29.95

12/5 City Hunter: Secret Service
[English VHS]
ADV Films • US$19.98

12/5 Don't Leave Me Alone, Daisy DVD Collection
[Subtitled DVD]
Bandai • US$39.98

12/5 Escaflowne • Vol. 2: Betrayal & Trust
[English VHS (edited or uncut)/Bilingual DVD]
Bandai • US$14.98/$19.98/$29.98

12/5 Fatal Fury OAV Series
[Bilingual DVD]
Viz Video • US$29.98

12/5 Jubei-chan the Ninja Girl • Vol. 3: Heart of Steel
[English VHS/Bilingual DVD]
Bandai • US$19.98/$29.98

12/5 Maison Ikkoku • Vol. 23: On Thin Ice
[Subtitled VHS]
Viz Video • US$28.95

12/5 Maison Ikkoku • Vol. 24: Days of Wine and Freeloaders
[Subtitled VHS]
Viz Video • US$28.95

12/5 Martian Successor Nadesico • Vol. 7: Contact!
[English VHS/Subtitled VHS]
ADV Films • US$19.98/$29.95

12/5 Nightmare Campus: A Total Nightmare
[Bilingual DVD]
Anime 18 • US$49.99

12/5 Outlaw Star DVD Collection 2
[Bilingual DVD]
Bandai • US$44.98

12/5 Sakura Diaries • Chapter 4
[English VHS]
ADV Films • US$19.98

12/5 Tenchi Muyô! • Vol. 1: Trouble Hatches
[English VHS, Toonami version]
Pioneer • US$14.98

12/5 Weird Oh's • Vol. 2: Wheel Trouble
[English VHS]
ADV Films • US$12.98

12/12 Magic Woman M
[English VHS]
Anime 18 • US$29.99

12/12 Maze: Time Traveling Playboy
[English VHS/Subtitled VHS]
U.S. Manga Corps • US$19.99/$19.99

12/12 The Slayers Try: Try Again!
[English VHS/Subtitled VHS]
Software Sculptors • US$19.99/$19.99

12/26 3x3 Eyes Collection
[Bilingual DVD]
Pioneer • US$64.98

NEW DATE! ***12/26 Black Heaven • Vol. 2: Legend of "Space Truckin'"***
[English VHS/Subtitled VHS/Bilingual DVD]
Pioneer • US$24.98/$24.98/$29.98

12/26 Fushigi Yûgi: The Mysterious Play • OAV Vol. 2: Memories
[English VHS/Subtitled VHS]
Pioneer • US$24.98/$24.98

12/26 Ranma 1/2 Martial Mayhem • Vol. 1: Buns of Steel
[Subtitledc VHS]
Viz Video • US$28.95

12/26 Tenchi Universe Collection • Vol. 5: Space 1
[Bilingual DVD]
Pioneer • US$29.98

JANUARY 2001

1/9 Demon Warrior Koji
[English VHS]
Anime 18 • US$29.99

1/9 Jubei-chan the Ninja Girl • Vol. 4 Final Showdown!
[English VHS/Bilingual DVD]
Bandai • US$19.98/$29.98

1/9 Maze: Beating Heart
[English VHS]
U.S. Manga Corps • US$19.99

1/9 Night Walker: Midnight Detective
[English VHS]
U.S. Manga Corps • US$19.99

1/9 Ranma 1/2 Martial Mayhem • Vol. 12: My Kagemusha, Myself
[English VHS]
Viz Video • US$24.95

1/9 Saber Marionette J DVD Collection
[Bilingual DVD]
Bandai • US$44.98

1/9 Silent Service
[Bilingual DVD]
U.S. Manga Corps • US$29.99

1/9 Urotsukidôji III: Return of the Overfiend
[Bilingual DVD]
Anime 18 • US$29.99

1/9 Virgin Fleet
[Bilingual DVD]
U.S. Manga Corps • US$29.99

1/16 Cardcaptors • Vol. 2: Power Match
[English VHS/DVD]
Nelvanna • US$14.98/$24.98

1/16 Cardcaptor Sakura • Vol. 2: Everlasting Memories
[Subtitled VHS/DVD]
Pioneer • US$24.98/$29.98

1/16 Ranma 1/2 Martial Mayhem • Vol. 1: Buns of Steel
[Subtitled VHS]
Viz Video • US$28.95

1/23 A.D. Police • Vol. 1
[English VHS]
ADV Films • US$19.98

1/23 Amazing Nurse Nanako • Vol. 3: The Last Spiral
[English VHS/Subtitled VHS/Bilingual DVD]
Pioneer • US$24.98/$24.98/$29.98

1/23 Bubblegum Crisis: Tokyo 2040 • Vol. 11: Avatar
[English VHS/Subtitled VHS]
ADV Films • US$19.98/$29.95

1/23 Fushigi Yûgi, The Mysterious Play OVA • Vol. 3: Reflections
[English VHS/Subtitled VHS]
Pioneer • US$24.98/$24.98

1/23 Gasaraki • Vol. 3: Betrayal
[English VHS/Bilingual DVD]
ADV Films • US$19.98/$29.98

1/23 Lost Universe • Vol. 4
[English VHS/Subtitled VHS/Bilingual DVD]
ADV Films • US$19.98/$29.95/$29.98

1/23 Maison Ikkoku • Vol. 25: Welcome to the Doghouse
[Subtitled VHS]
Viz Video • US$28.95

1/23 Maison Ikkoku • Vol. 26: Requiem for Soichiro
[Subtitled VHS]
Viz Video • US$28.95

1/23 Pokémon • Vol. 25: Round One!
[English VHS/DVD]
Viz Video/Pioneer • US$14.98/$24.98

1/23 Pokémon • Vol. 26: Friends & Rivals
[English VHS/DVD]
Viz Video/Pioneer • US$14.98/$24.98

1/23 Reboot • Vol. 2
[English VHS/DVD]
ADV Films • US$14.98/$24.98

1/23 Trigun • Vol. 6: Project Seeds
[English VHS/Subtitled VHS/Bilingual DVD]
Pioneer • US$24.98/$24.98/$29.98

1/23 Weird Oh's • Vol. 3: Traffic Jam!
[English VHS]
ADV Films • US$12.98

1/30 Bio Hunter
[Bilingual DVD]
Urban Vision • US$24.95

1/30 Bride of Darkness
[English VHS]
Kitty Media • US$24.95

1/30 Dual! • Vol. 3: Artifacts
[English VHS/Subtitled VHS]
Pioneer • US$14.98/$14.98

1/30 Irresponsible Captain Tylor • Vols. 1-4
[Bilingual DVD]
The Right Stuf • US$34.95 each

1/30 Kite: Directors Cut
[English VHS/Subtitled VHS]
Kitty Media • US$29.95/$29.95

1/30 Tenchi Universe • Vol. 6: Space II
[English VHS/Subtitled VHS/Bilingual DVD]
Pioneer • US$24.98/$24.98/$29.98

1/30 Tobor the 8th Man • Vols. 1-4
[English VHS]
The Right Stuf • US$19.98 each

FEBRUARY 2001

2/6 Sailor Moon S TV Series • Vol. 1: Pure Hearts
[English VHS/Subtitled VHS]
Pioneer • US$14.98/$14.98

2/6 Sailor Moon S TV Series • Vol. 2: The Love War
[English VHS/Subtitled VHS]
Pioneer • US$14.98/$14.98

2/13 Pure Love
[English VHS]
Anime 18 • US$29.99

2/22 Sailor Moon: Red Hearts & Silver Crystals
[English VHS]
ADV Films • US$12.98

2/22 Sailor Moon: Introducing Sailor Jupiter
[English VHS]
ADV Films • US$12.98

2/27 La Blue Girl Live: Demon King
[Subtitled VHS (Live Action)]
Kitty Media • US$29.95

2/27 Maiden of Destruction
[English VHS]
Kitty Media • US$24.95

PLEASE NOTE:

Our translations are indicated with parentheses and quotes, while English titles provided by the author/publisher are set in all caps.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24)

Best of the Best

Anime

TOP 5 LIVE-ACTION MOVIES BASED ON MANGA OR ANIME
Lone Wolf and Cub: Baby Cart at River Styx
Female Convict Scorpion
Fudoh: the Next Generation
Wicked City
Dragonball: The Magic Begins

TOP 5 OPENING-TITLES SEQUENCE
Cowboy Bebop
Neon Genesis Evangelion
Giant Robo
Revolutionary Girl Utena
Trigun

TOP 5 SPACE BATTLES
Mobile Suit Gundam III
Aim for the Top!: Gunbuster
Final Yamato
Macross: Do You Remember Love?
Arcadia of My Youth

TOP 5 MONSTER MASHES
Devilman
Vampire Hunter D
Wicked City
The Guyver
Ogre Slayer

TOP 5 PSYCHIC BATTLES
X
Harmageddon
Ai City
Babel II
Mobile Suit Gundam III

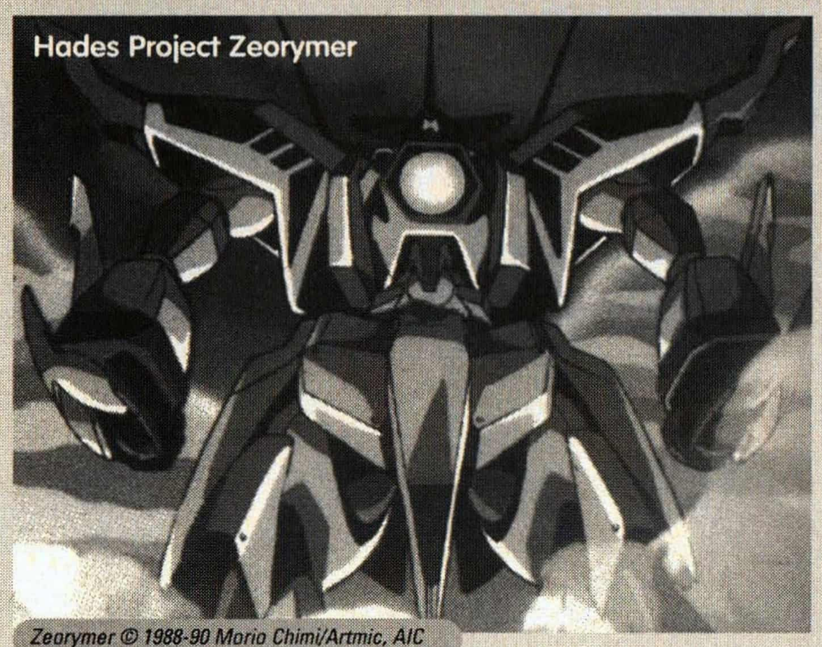
TOP 5 NINJA ANIME
Dagger of Kamui
Ninja Scroll
Ninja Resurrection
Wrath of the Ninja (Yotoden)
Ninja Cadets

BEST COSTUMING
Gundam Wing
The multitalented Yutaka Izubuchi has designed everything from spaceships to robots to live-action monsters-of-the-week, and, in recent years, he's taken up a sideline as a costumer for other designers' characters. Izubuchi's wardrobing resume includes ***Gundam 0080***, ***Gasaraki***, and the import-only ***Votoms*** side story "Shining Heresy," but his best work yet is on display in ***Gundam Wing***. Check out the 19th-century stylings of OZ's nattily attired officers, the fashionable fatigues of White Fang's resistance fighters, and the decadent, 18th-century splendor of the Romefeller Foundation executives. Never before has anime been so *pret-a-porter!*

BEST FINISHING MOVE
Hades Project Zeorymer
An '80s-era gem directed by Toshihiro "***Iczer-One***" Hirano, this one has damn near everything—a secret society planning to take over the world; a tortured hero; awesome mecha design; a brave-and-bold musical score; and, lest we forget, one of the most impressive collections of anime robots ever, headed up by the titular Zeorymer, whose nuclear-blast-style finishing move is so powerful it's just *evil*. You actually feel sorry for the *villains* in this one.

BEST AERIAL FIGHT SCENE
Macross Plus
Animated based on a research trip to the U.S. to observe actual jet fighters at an American military base, ***Macross Plus*** returns to the roots of ***Superdimensional Fortress Macross***' Valkyrie mecha, which had been originally based on F-14 Tomcat fighter planes. This time, two experimental, transforming Valkyries buzz each other on in a balletic dogfight that will take your breath away.

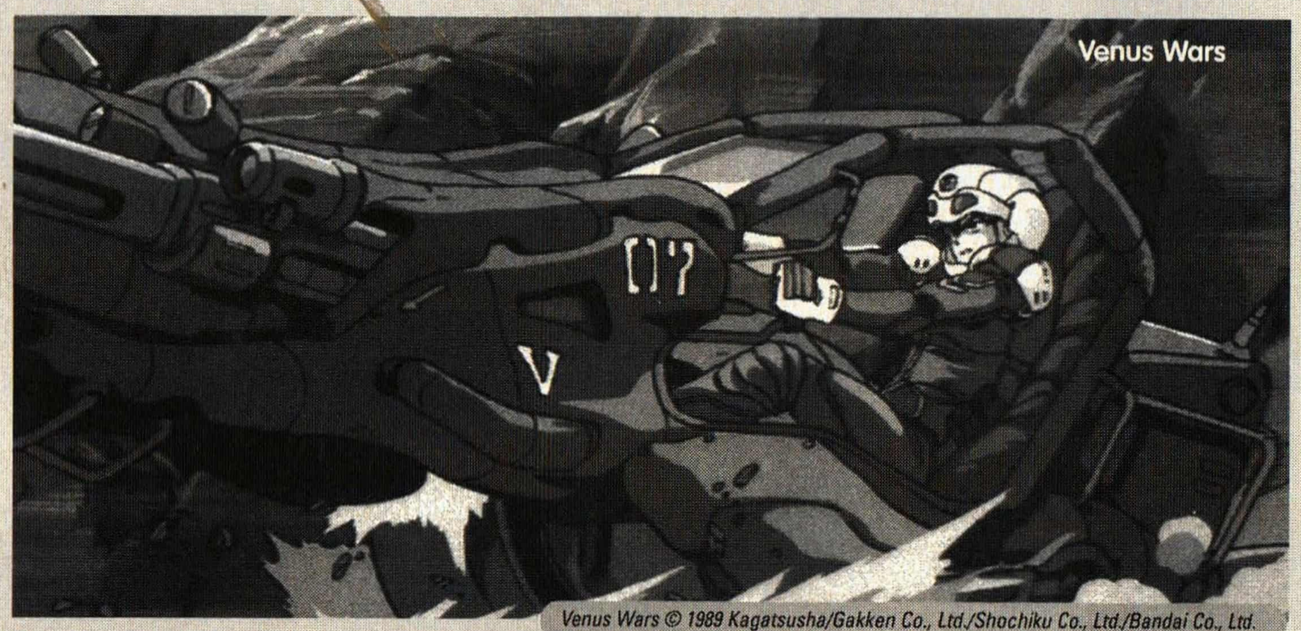
FUNNIEST ENGLISH TITLE
Brain Powered
Without even getting into new titles foisted on anime shows by their U.S. distributors, the annals of anime are full of examples of English-language titles chosen by Japanese creators without an ear for how they sound to English speakers, from ***Eat-Man***, to ***Creamy Mami*** to ***The Big O***, but of those imported to the U.S., ***Brain Powered*** holds the honor of funniest to repeat to your friends (okay, ***Eat-Man*** is a close second). Are they really powered by brains? Well, sort of.


Hades Project Zeorymer
Zeorymer © 1988-90 Mario Chimi/Artmic, AIC

BEST CASE OF CHARLIE'S ANGELS-STYLE FEMALE EMPOWERMENT
Bubblegum Crisis
Four women take on the mechanized drones of an abusive corporation in powered armor and prove that even in high heels, women can kick butt, especially backed by a pounding rock-'n'-roll soundtrack.

GUILTIEST PLEASURE
Jungle De Ikou
Yes, trust us when we say that you'd rather be caught with a box filled with dynamite, adult magazines, and a complete collection of Vanilla Ice records than ***Jungle De Ikou*** playing in your VCR when your romantic interest or parents walk in. It's just too darn hard to explain the allure of a big-breasted jungle-dancing magical girl without getting into Freudian territory. Don't even try.

BEST EXAMPLE OF *SHÔJO* MASS DESTRUCTION
X, the Movie
You can call them girly, you can call them sissies, you can call them wussy pretty boys, but there's no denying that Kamui and his psychic friends have what it takes to level buildings with ease. ***X, the Movie*** skips the dynamic talking-head sequences of the manga and goes straight for the explosions with a vengeance. Whole sections of Tokyo are destroyed while Kamui whines like Michael Jackson. Whoever thought an "art film" could be so incredibly violent?


Venus Wars
Venus Wars © 1989 Kagatsusha/Gakken Co., Ltd./Shochiku Co., Ltd./Bandai Co., Ltd.

ANIMATOR MOST DESERVING WIDER RECOGNITION
Yoshikazu Yasuhikio
Still better known in the U.S. as a character designer than an animation director, Yoshikazu "Yas" Yasuhiko is named as an influence by nine out of ten Japanese animators, and when you see the impressive, we-don't-need-no-stinkin'-rotoscope action sequences he dished out for the ***Crusher Joe*** movie, the ***Mobile Suit Gundam*** movies, and ***Venus Wars***, you'll understand why. Yas also does manga with the same you-are-there storyboard quality; so far, only his ***Venus Wars*** series has been translated for the U.S. market (by Studio Proteus), but it's well worth looking for.

BEST ANDROID SUPER VIXEN
Cutey Honey
In a field crowded with competitors, Go Nagai's original busty champion of justice still stands out from the crowd. Cutey's sweet, buxom beauty is not that of a victim or bystander, but a butt-kicking Barb Wire without ego or implants.

MOST INSPIRATIONAL EXERCISE ANIME
Dragon Ball Z
The things you can learn from watching anime! Did you know, for example, that if you train hard enough in the martial arts, that you could learn to fire power blasts? Or fly? Well, now you do. Feel the burn, baby!

BEST BAD VIDEO ALMOST WORTH WATCHING FOR THE DUB
Mad Bull
Put this insane anime on at a party and watch how fast you lose friends. Un-P.C in the extreme, with nary a socially redeeming value in sight, ***Mad Bull*** starts out stupid, then goes straight downhill from there. Thankfully, nobody involved with its English adaptation seemed to have any illusions about the quality of the product they were producing. Insanely written and dubbed at the utmost level of camp, ***Mad Bull*** spews an offensive Tao of wisdom in every episode that will blow your mind. Easily the most quotable English dub ever released in the United States, we wish we could actually quote some of the dialogue that we love so much from ***Mad Bull***, but unfortunately, almost none of it is printable.

BEST ANIME SPLATTERVISION
Apocalypse Zero
You would typically expect an anime that starts off with the end of the world as we know it to go off in a direction that's more ***Cyborg*** or ***Screamers*** than, say, ***Sense and Sensibility***. And you'd be right—in the case of ***Apocalypse Zero***, right beyond your wildest nightmares. You see, there's these two youngsters learning the world's most powerful martial art and how to control these really awesome battlesuits, and then there are some of the grossest mutant human monsters you can imagine. When a 45-minute video features a scene where someone's face is sucked off, and that's not even the most shocking thing in the video, you know you'll be getting your horror-show money's worth.

BEST WORKADAY FANTASY
Special Duty Combat Unit Shinesman
A hilariously spot-on anime parody that nine-to-fivers will especially appreciate, ***Shinesman*** presents a world where the Power Rangers-style super team is a corporate creation, kind of like the Spice Girls. You get the job, you pick the color of your battlesuit. Unfortunately, your fellow team members are pretty color blind. (Moss green? Sepia? Egad.)

BEST BONE-RATTLING ROBOT APOCALYPSE
Giant Robo

Manga

For sheer, robot-on-robot power battles, the aggressively retro-styled ***Giant Robo*** takes on the entirety of anime's mechanized past and runs wild with brain-busting power fantasies. Offering grand storytelling in the pulp tradition (complete with numerous in-jokes), ***Robo***, in all its operatic splendor, is all about the rock 'em sock' em pleasure of watching two big metal mountains colliding until one of them is junkyard scrap.

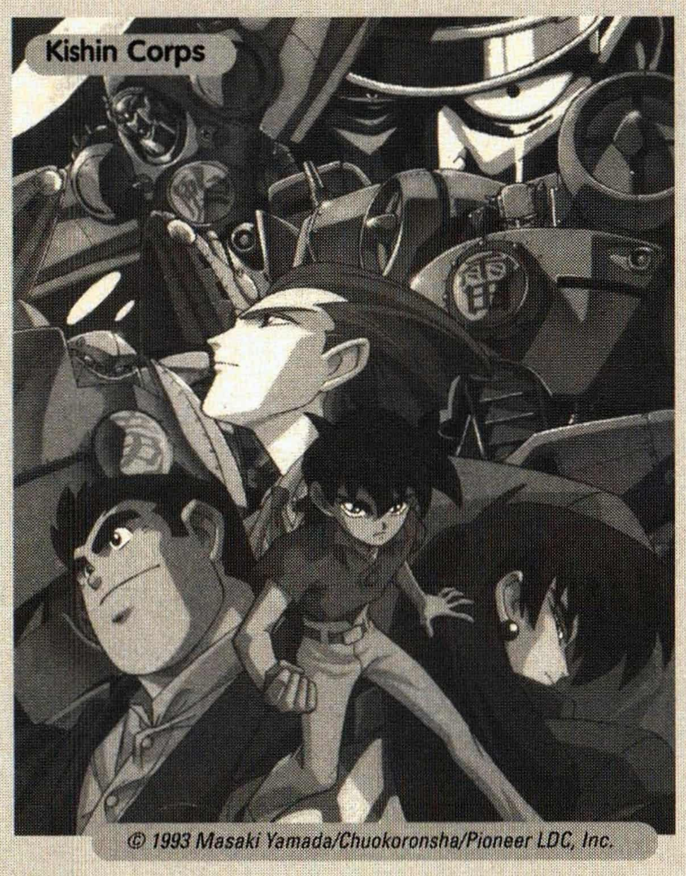
MOST MACHO CHARACTER
Chief Chujo, Giant Robo
Stopped only by circumstance from taking on the floating Eye of Folger with his bare fists, Chief Chujo's arms ain't too short to box with god, and thus wins the macho sweepstakes hands-down. Given the competition in ***Giant Robo***'s awesome super-powered "Experts of Justice" and their nemeses, the "Magnificent Ten," that's saying something.

BEST 'WHAT IF?" STORY
Kishin Corps
Set in an alternate version of 1941, ***Kishin Corps***, a.k.a. ***Alien Defender Geo-Armor***, gives ***The X-Files*** a run for its conspiracy theories with the out-and-out weirdness of a story involving alien technology making its mark on a very-much-in-progress World War II. Featuring the same kind of retro-aesthetic as ***Giant Robo***, ***Kishin Corps*** goes the extra mile with such brain-bending concepts as protoplasmic, machine-gun toting aliens; transforming stream trains; giant robots emblazoned with Nazi swastikas; and Eva Braun as a double agent (!).

BEST ANIME TO WATCH "BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD" STYLE
Ranma 1/2
"Hey, Beavis,check out that short guy with the bag of panties." "Uh, yeah, yeah, stealing underwear rules." "Uh, did that guy just turn into a chick?" "Yeah, Butthead, cursed springs suck. Huh huh huh huh huh...."

MOST THOROUGHLY DISGUISED DEEP WISDOM
Fist of the North Star, the Movie
You can blame the original manga for the over-the-top setting—a postapocalyptic world overrun by eight-foot-tall punk rockers on super-steroids who get dismembered in a variety of ways by hero Kenshiro and his ever-frowning companion, Rei. But the dialogue is what'll really blow your mind. Classic "fist talk" includes such gems as Ken and Rei's campfire chat in which Rei says in all earnestness: "I believe losing Julia is somehow linked to the ultimate fulfillment of your destiny." Dang, that's pretty deep. Expect to be boggled by Shin's unforgettable response when his older brother bursts through his door and says " It's all mine, Shin, and your woman too," whereas Shin laughs and replies, " You came all this way just to steal a woman, Raoh? I remember reading a book about ancient Greeks who did something like that, but I never finished the book." Huh?

BEST ANIME PARODY, JAPANESE DIVISION
Spaceship Agga Ruter
Sure, it's an adults-only smut video, but ***Agga Ruter*** manages to pack in side-splitting parodies of ***Maps***, ***Tenchi Muyô!***, ***Queen Emeraldas***, and a host of other sci-fi favorites, in between the



© 1993 Masaki Yamada/Chuokoronsha/Pioneer LDC, Inc.

obligatory (but also very funny) naughty bits. In this wacky tale, space pirates not only imprison captured ships inside force field containers, they proceed to wrap them in pretty pink ribbons for their bosses. ***Agga Ruter*** also competes with ***Revolutionary Girl Utena*** for "Best Chorus," with google-eyed robot servitors that chime in to comment on the action at regular intervals. (There's nothing more unexpected than a herd of metallic Kermit-the-frog lookalikes popping up onscreen to gargle, "Magic Naked Apron!")

BEST ANIME PARODY, AMERICAN DIVISION
South Park
Over the years, ***The Simpsons*** has turned in some spot-on spoofs of Japanese pop culture, from Mister Sparkle to Battling Seizure Robots. But no American parody has ever skewered an anime title with such wickedly scatological precision as Comedy Central's ***South Park***, in the deservedly legendary Chimpoko-mon episode. With its eerily plausible cast of collectible monsters, its perfect mimicry of kid-vid technobabble, and even parodies of lame American toy ads for balance's sake, ***South Park***'s spoof was pretty much the last word in ***Pokémon*** parody.

BEST ANIME-DERIVED TOY
Kaiyodo Evangelion Figures
Sure, Todd McFarlane's lineup of anime character statues are nice to look at, but we'll give the nod to a line of toys that not only look impressive but can also bust a bunch of groovy poses. Kaiyodo's stunning ***Evangelion*** replicas, available from comic stores and toy retailers across the nation, feature plenty of strategically located joints, a complete arsenal of anti-Angel weapons, and cute gimmicks like special Kaworu-gripping hands.

BEST BARGAIN
DVD Box Sets
Okay, so the best *best* bargain is probably picking up cheap laser discs at anime conventions, but when it comes to collecting a full series, the current run of DVD sets is pretty hard to beat on a dollars-per-episode basis. And the best part is not having to deal with the eternal "sub vs. dub?" question—go bilingual, baby! ☆

MANGA MOST RESEMBLING A SUMMER BLOCKBUSTER
Gunsmith Cats
Who are the cats that deliver ten times out of ten? Gunsmith Cats. You're damn right! Missing only a soundtrack by Isaac Hayes or Curtis Mayfield, Kenichi Sonoda's ***Gunsmith Cats***' tale of bounty hunters who set up shop in the Chicago area features cars, guns, and explosions galore. The gritty urban settings coupled with the high-energy car chases and action scenes masterfully recreate the atmosphere of those '70s action flicks. If you're talkin' about ***Gunsmith Cats***, then we can dig it.

BEST MONSTERS
Inu-Yasha
Rumiko Takahashi's latest serial involving a time-traveling schoolgirl and her half-demon partner in search of a magical jewel really shines when parading out a jaw-dropping variety of increasingly horrible monsters, including a centipede woman; carrion-eating crow demons; a face-eating protoplasmic blob; "spider-heads"; and miscellanea such as the "nothing woman" and a frog monster who devours women's souls. Ewww!

BEST YASUHIRO IMAGAWA HOMAGE
Gigantor
While the retro maestro takes a break from revamping classic super-robot series like ***Getter Robo*** and ***Giant Robo***, fans jonesing for more of Imagawa's old-school Sturm und Drang should check out ***Gigantor***—a 12-issue comic series created by Ted Nomura and Ben Dunn, and published by Antarctic Press. Dunn, the perennially popular American manga-style artist, gives the original super 'bot a ***Giant Robo***-esque treatment, complete with earth-shaking action and big-beaked mad scientists clinging to their creations' shoulders.

BEST MANGA FOR HOPELESS ROMANTICS
Oh My Goddess!
A romance manga that expertly maintains a delicate balancing act between the premise's fantasy scenario of a goddess coming down from heaven to be your girlfriend (kind of like Cindy Crawford leaping out of the ***Sports Illustrated*** Swimsuit Issue) and a mushy love story between a shy, unassuming lad and a woman who could have any man she wants, ***Oh My Goddess!*** has what it takes to make any incurable romantic feel warm inside.

BEST READING FOR ASPIRING MAD BOTANISTS
Nausicaä of the Valley of Wind
If plants are your preoccupation and world domination your long-term goal, you could do worse than to take Hayao Miyazaki's ***Nausicaä*** as your bible. While warrior princess Nausicaä's polluted, war-torn world is full of ecological marvels and terrors, from giant Ohmu bugs to revived God Warriors, by the end of the saga it's clear that the vegetable kingdom is the mad scientist's best friend. As the warring armies unleash crawling seas of sentient fungi and legions of beady-eyed, cactus-like Heedra warriors, Miyazaki's manga magnum opus makes it clear that when you fool with Mother Nature, Mother Nature is gonna fool with you.

BEST REFERENCE FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS
Black Jack
Not only is Osamu Tezuka's ***Black Jack*** a manga classic, it's also highly educational. As the patchwork physician journeys the world taking on impossible cases, he's constantly encountering weird and obscure medical conditions. Future doctors, take note—if you ever come across these curious symptoms in the years ahead, you'll know exactly what to do. "Hm, a classic parasitic twin. Fetch me an artificial body shell, *stat!*"

BEST MANGA FOR KIDS
Pokemon,The Electric Tale of Pikachu
The ***Pokémon*** craze may be pretty much over, but if you forget you ever heard the word and look at the comic, you'll be surprised to find that it offers much more than just a franchise. Toshihiro Ono's art fills the Pokémon with life, and his solid storytelling is a step above the TV episodes, so adults as well as kids can enjoy the story and remember just what it was that was so cute about ***Pokémon*** in the first place.

BEST UNDISGUISED NIHILISM
Lone Wolf and Cub
The saga of an assassin whose life was destroyed by a power-hungry clan that

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

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Best of the Best

Manga

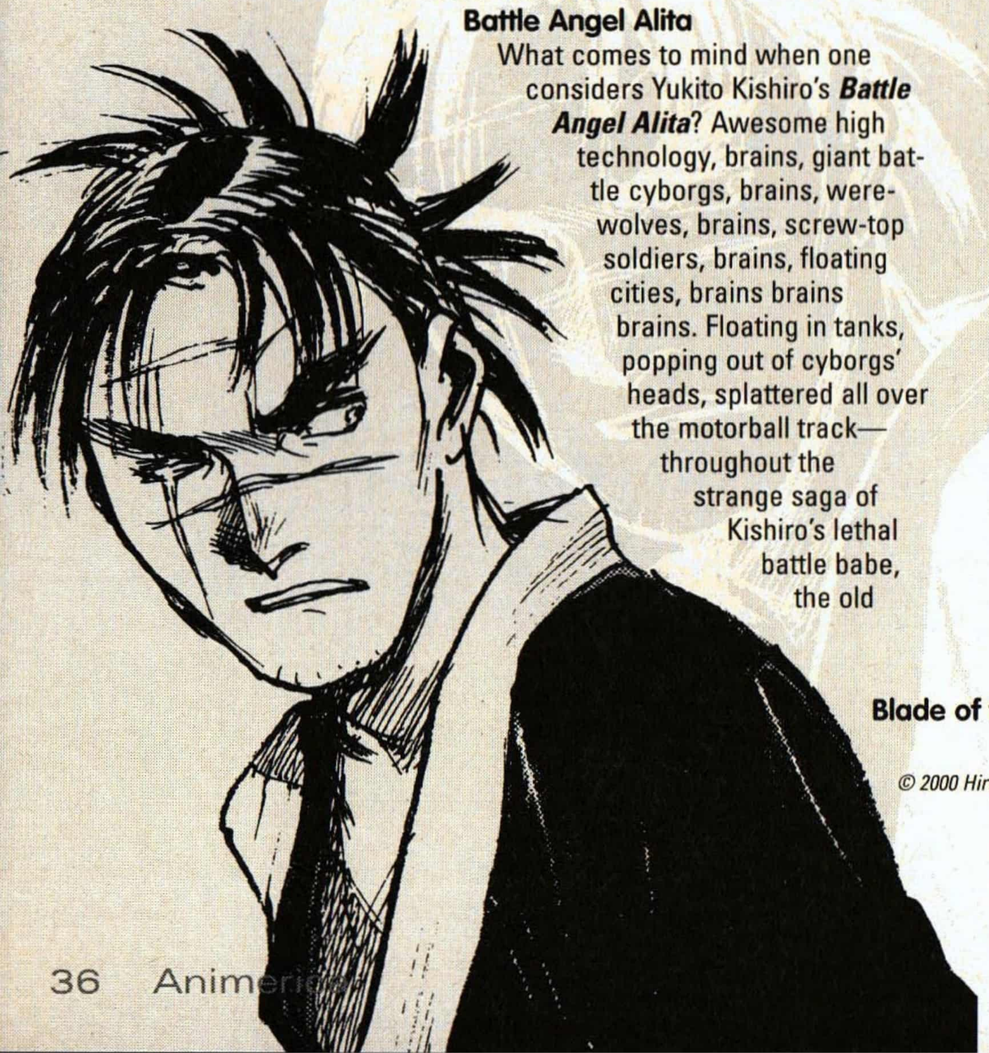
killed his wife and framed him as a traitor, ***Lone Wolf and Cub*** features a grim samurai hero that could compete with Clint Eastwood for dour expressions, and a cute baby son in a booby-trapped babycart. See the Lone Wolf take his son on a journey to the crossroads of hell, living the life of the hired killer until he can seek revenge, and learn about some extremely harsh zen philosphy that you'll never hear repeated on ***Kung Fu: The Legend Continues***. "Meet the Buddha, *kill* the Buddha."

BEST TECHNOBABBLE
Ghost in the Shell
Masamune Shirow's manga titles are in general technical to the point of needing college courses to understand them (***Appleseed*** being a stellar case in point), but the artist's later manga output is enough to make even brilliant brains strain. ***Ghost in the Shell*** tackles the ethical issues of humanity's inevitable creation of a sentient computer program on an even more philosophical level than the movie. Like they say in ***The Matrix***—whoa.

BEST HORROR MANGA
Panorama of Hell
It's fair to say that anything by manga author Hideshi Hino will leave lasting scars on your brain, but this one really takes the cake. It's not enough that he's written a semi-autobiographic family saga from the P.O.V. of a traumatized, lifelong victim who has finally snapped and gone all psychotic. Oh, no—he wants to share it with you: headless torsos, rivers of blood, unspeakable desires of mass murder and all. From grue-coated carnage to queasy catharsis, it's as brave, bold, and scary as a horror manga can possibly get.

BEST CRITIQUE OF SAMURAI CODE, WITH SEVERED LIMBS
Blade of the Immortal
It slices, it dices, it points out the shortcomings of the chivalric code of conduct! Not only is Hiroaki Samura's ***Blade of the Immortal*** jam-packed with eye-popping fight sequences, it also does a brisk trade in ethical conundrums. Take this gem from master villain Kagehisa Anotsu: "If death...simply dying...is all it takes to save your honor, then even a monkey could be a samurai!" Then someone gets cut into 27 pieces in a double-page splash. Awesome!

BEST BRAINS
Battle Angel Alita
What comes to mind when one considers Yukito Kishiro's ***Battle Angel Alita***? Awesome high technology, brains, giant battle cyborgs, brains, werewolves, brains, screw-top soldiers, brains, floating cities, brains brains brains. Floating in tanks, popping out of cyborgs' heads, splattered all over the motorball track—throughout the strange saga of Kishiro's lethal battle babe, the old gray matter plays a starring role. Never before has the philosophical schism between mind and matter been handled with such visceral, violent vividity.



Blade of the Immortal

© 2000 Hiroaki Samura

BEST RELATIONSHIP MANGA
Maison Ikkoku
Far from the usual fantasy relationships you see in manga, Rumiko Takahashi's ***Maison Ikkoku*** goes to the other extreme, by showing the little heartbreaks that come with real-life, inperfect romance between imperfect people, from misunderstandings and shyness to tension over Christmas gifts and embarassing confessions while thoroughly inebriated. This is the story that understands why you can't tell the girl you really like how you feel, or why you make the man you love jump through hoops to prove it. Here is the human condition, in all its weird glory.

BEST MANGA FOR GORE AND BUSH TO READ
Eagle
It seems strange that ***Eagle*** is written by a Japanese, because its depiction of how American politics work seems eerily accurate. The story's strength lies in its ability to quickly make the reader feel like they are part of the campaign staff working night and day to gain momentum by winning votes to elect the nation's first Asian-American president, an insider's view complicated by the fact that the main character—a journalist touring with the campaign to cover it for a Japanese newspaper—is the illegitimate son of the candidate. This presidential election would hold a few surprises for even Al and George.

BEST READING FOR LONEYHEARTS
Video Girl Ai
Can't get a date? Neither can Yota Moteuchi, the lovable loser who puts a magical videotape in his VCR and unwittingly brings a video girl to life. ***Video Girl Ai*** starts out by offering comedic situations to make other "Dateless" dudes forget they're sitting at home on a Friday night reading manga instead of out on a steamy date, then switches gears to focus sharply on the pain and wonder of love, reminding you why you should at least be out there trying. Is it better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all? Definitely.

BEST NEW "MANGA STYLE" COMIC
Blue Monday
A breath of fresh air in the current flood of titles in the "manga style," Chynna Clugston-Major's ***Blue Monday*** follows American teenager Bleu Finnegan and her adventures in high school and the early '90s music scene. Every issue is filled with nostalgic music references, pranks, romance, hilarious Irish swear words, and, occasionally, viciously cute superdeforms.

BEST MANGA DEAL FOR THE DOLLAR
***TIE!* Animerica Extra/Super Manga Blast!**
One thing that Japan has always had over America as far as comics are concerned is the anthology magazine—the thicker the better, in the case of the best-selling Japanese magazines such as *SHÔNEN JUMP*. Now the U.S. is finally getting some of that anthology action, and the best manga buys on the market right now are *ANIMERICA EXTRA* and *SUPER MANGA BLAST!*. Not counting ads, letters, or articles, both magazines feature approximately 124 pages of manga for US$4.95 for five ongoing manga stories each by some of Japan's top artists. Do the math—that's about 4 cents a page for some pretty awesome manga titles. This is a great trend!

BEST MANGA MAGAZINE FOR *SHÔJO* LOVERS
Smile
Just as good a deal for the dollar as *ANIMERICA EXTRA* and *SUPER MANGA BLAST!*, *SMILE* goes for a razor-sharp focus on the girl-type manga reader, of which (thanks to the popularity of anime series such as ***Sailor Moon***, ***Fushigi Yûgi***, and ***Revolutionary Girl Utena***) there are more all the time. This means that North American readers can finally dig into lesser-known (but best-selling in Japan) girls' comics such as ***Peach Girl***. Now if only we could get the fashion magazines too!

BEST MANGA MAGAZINE TO READ IN THE BATHROOM
Pulp
The bathroom is, among other things, a place of reflection and peace, where the hectic world is temporarily put on hold and a person can finally take a deep breath, relax, and think...and that's where ***Pulp*** really comes in handy. A "for adults" manga mag, ***Pulp*** has intelligently written, in-depth articles on Japanese media and culture just a few pages away from ridiculous ultraviolence and hot, explicit sexual manga that somehow isn't cheap and trashy. Grab a copy, sit down and ponder the meaning of life, the universe and everything.

BEST MANGA HICCUP CURE
Bakune Young
A one-man-against-the-*yakuza*, supercharged celebration of violence, ***Bakune Young*** is a visual assault will leave bruises on your brain. Never before has such agitated energy and meticulous attention to detail been poured into the depicition of serious beatings, with panel-by-panel demonstrations of the many ways to put someone in the hospital...or morgue.

BEST CROSSOVER MANGA ARTIST
Kia Asamiya
Even as a host of American artists strive to emulate the style and storytelling of Japanese manga, one of Japan's top talents is bringing the real thing to Western audiences. Not content to simply license his Japanese work for Stateside republication, Kia Asamiya is doing an awesome full-color ***Phoenix Resurrection: Dark Angel*** series for Image, while simultaneously importing an American institution back to Japan with his ongoing ***Batman*** manga. Like a modern-day Colossus of Rhodes, this ambitious artist stands astride the comic industries of two continents.

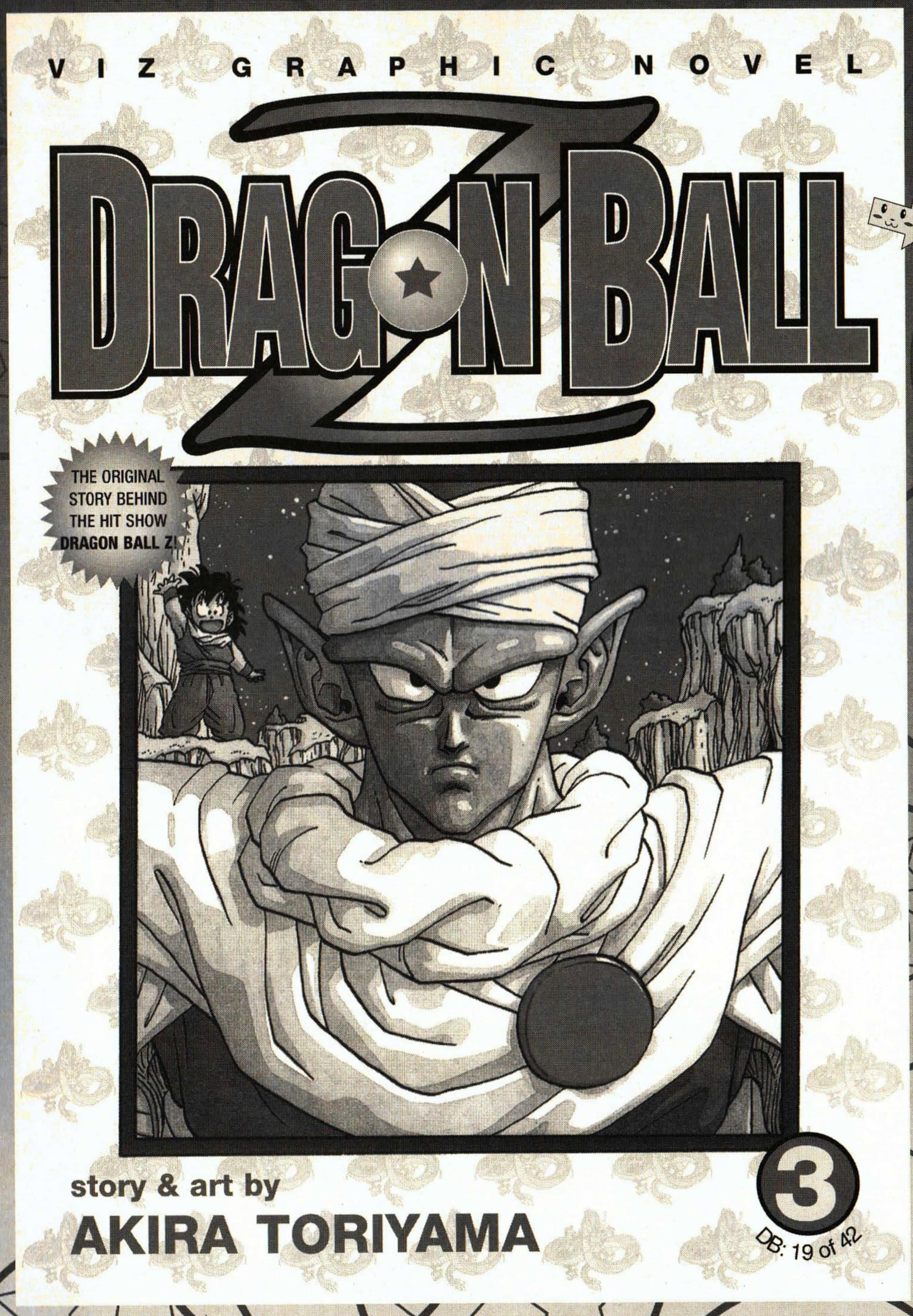
BEST ROLE MODEL FOR ASPIRING MANGA ARTISTS
Adam Warren
Do people give you a hard time for liking anime and manga? Do they laugh at your drawings and say you'll never amount to anything? There is no sweeter revenge on those who teased you in school than living your dream and making money doing it (and then going to your high school reunion to rub their noses in it...bwah, ha, ha). Adam Warren is the role model for anyone who nurses the secret desire to be a manga artist. His renditions of ***Dirty Pair*** and ***Bubblegum Crisis***, clearly Japanese-inspired, yet original and fresh, have been largely responsible for finally bringing the "manga style" into the mainstream. Follow your dream, and maybe someday you'll be a hot property too. ☆

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 55)

DRAGON BALL Z VOL. 3

It's Goku Vs. Vegeta in a battle to save the earth! But will Goku's friends survive the battle?

Story and Art by Akira Toriyama



January Comics Checklist

On Sale January 10

- ❍ Magical Pokemon Journey Part 3 #6
- ❍ Dragon Ball Part 3 #8
- ❍ Inu-Yasha Part 5 #8

On Sale January 17

- ❍ Marionette Generation Vol. 1 graphic novel
- ❍ Pokemon Adventures Part 3 #6
- ❍ Dragon Ball Z Part 4 #2
- ❍ Aqua Knight Part 2 #4

On Sale January 24

- ❍ Inu-Yasha Vol. 8 graphic novel
- ❍ Dragon Ball Z Vol. 3 graphic novel
- ❍ Neon Genesis Evangelion Book 5 #4
- ❍ Ranma 1/2 Part 9 #9

On Sale January 31

- ❍ Eagle #12: Suspicion
- ❍ No Need for Tenchi! Part 10 #5
- ❍ El Hazard: The Magnificent World #5

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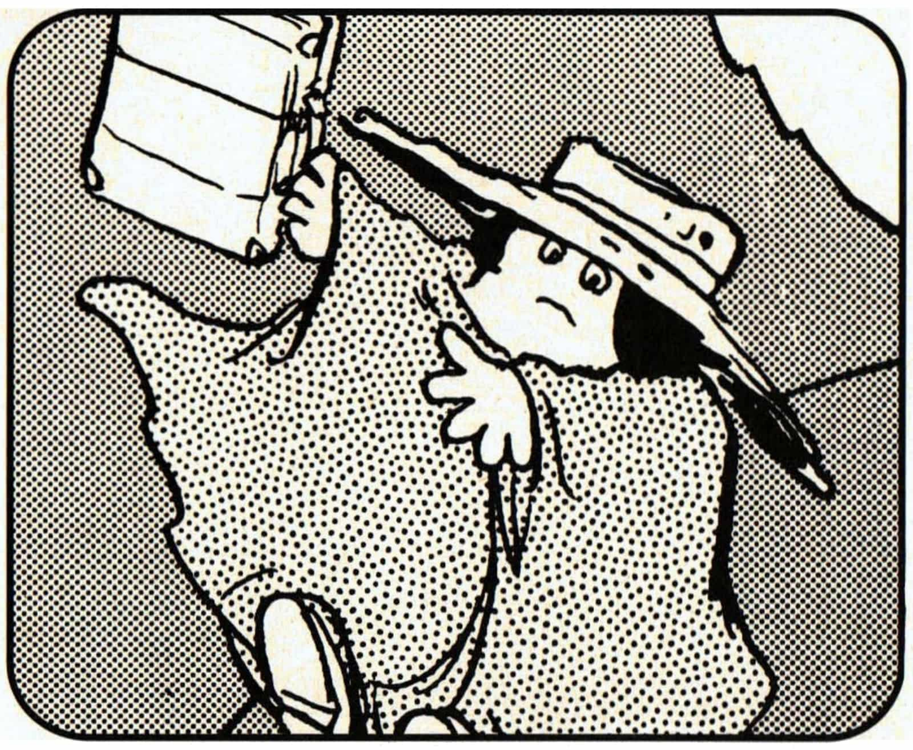
In Stores This Month

story thus far : read before boarding, please

galaxy express 999

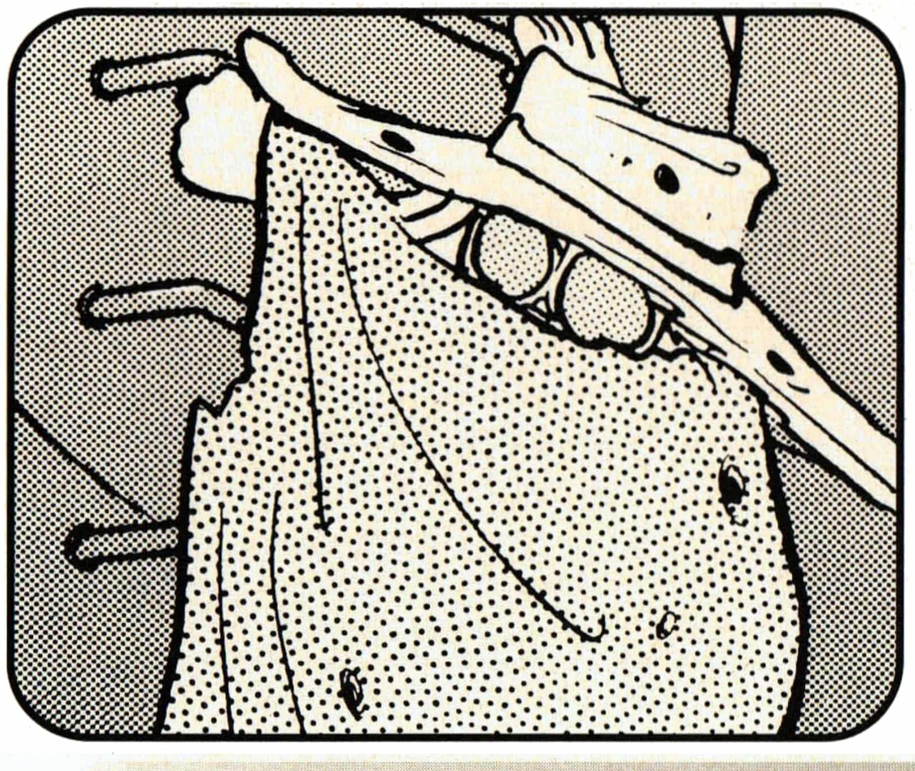


tetsuro

*"**Real** pirates don't take the lives of people or organisms that are not involved,"* says a serious Tochiro. *"There are different **kinds** of pirates."* The problem with relative morality, though, is that it's so *easy* to slide off the scale entirely. Then again, if there's one thing the work of *GE999* creator Matsumoto has been about, it's taking the responsibility to live life under one's own flag, just like Tochiro....

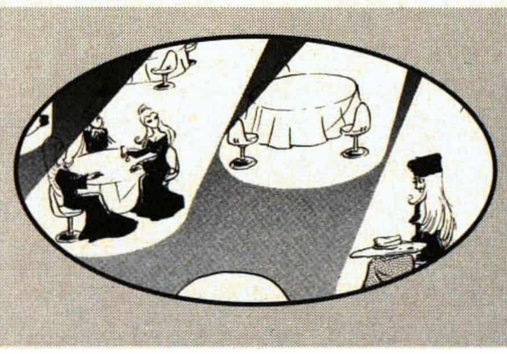
maetel

"Long time no see, Maetel!," greets a cheerful Tochiro. *"You haven't changed a bit from the old days, when you were with **Emeraldas**."* In the recent OAV *Maetel Legend*, we get the rare chance to see both Maetel and Emeraldas in their youth, back before they went their separate, eternal traveler ways. Knowing the events which lie ahead somehow only increases the tragedy....



tochiro

"Did you see Emeraldas?," asks an eager Tetsuro of a recently-returned-from-the-dead Tochiro. He replies, *"No, Tetsuro...I'd rather she remember me as I was—alive and well."* Sometimes, as Tochiro says, there are *advantages* to being just "heart"—times for which one is *thankful* for one's fate.

Next time:  *nightclubbing*

In any era and in any space, there are powerful and self-centered people who pursue only their own desires, at the expense of all others. Such blind ego is not without its consequences.

CHOOOOOM

THAT PLANET — IT SPARKLES LIKE A SILVERY *JEWEL.*

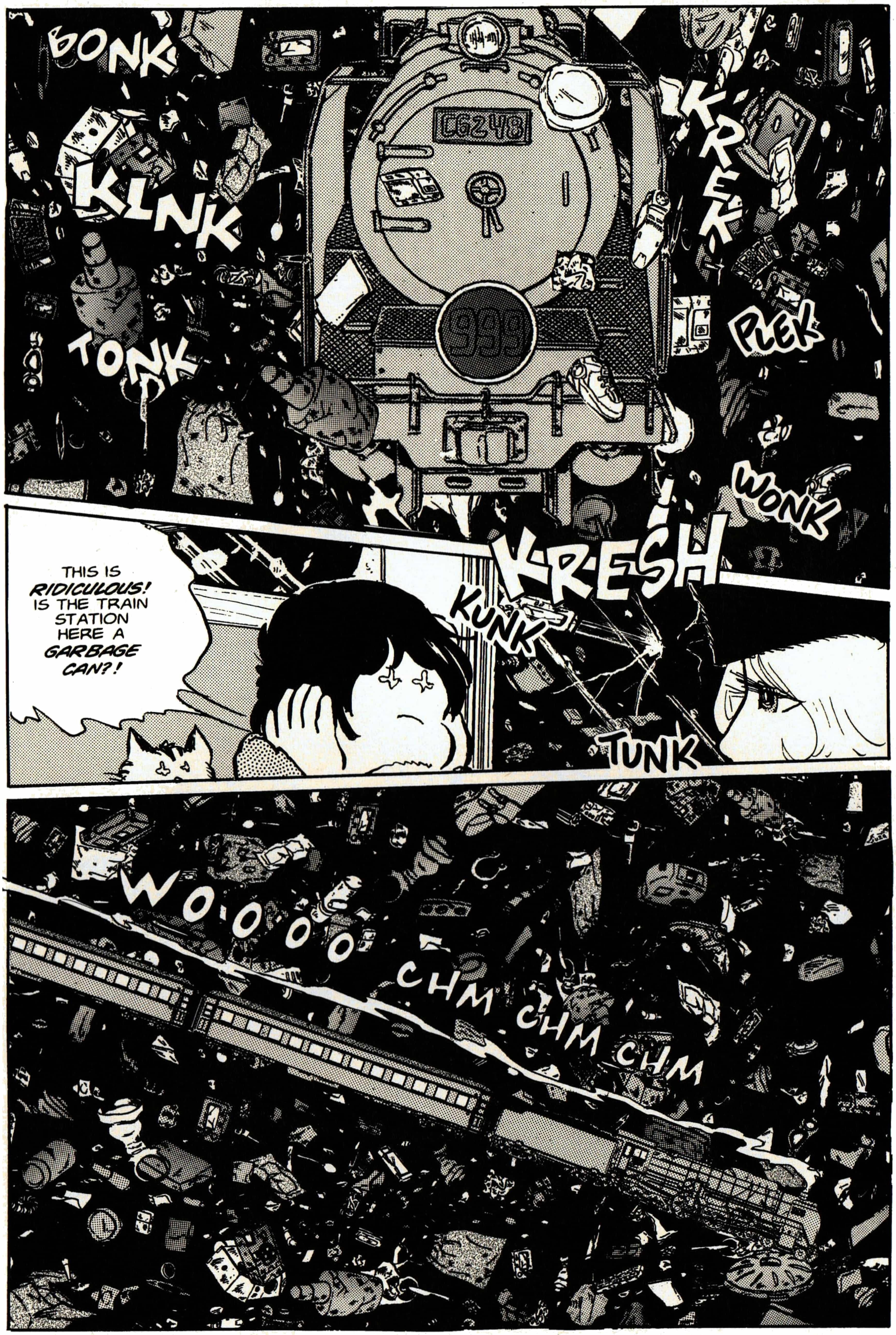
YES.... A *HEARTLESS* JEWEL, AS YOU'LL SEE...

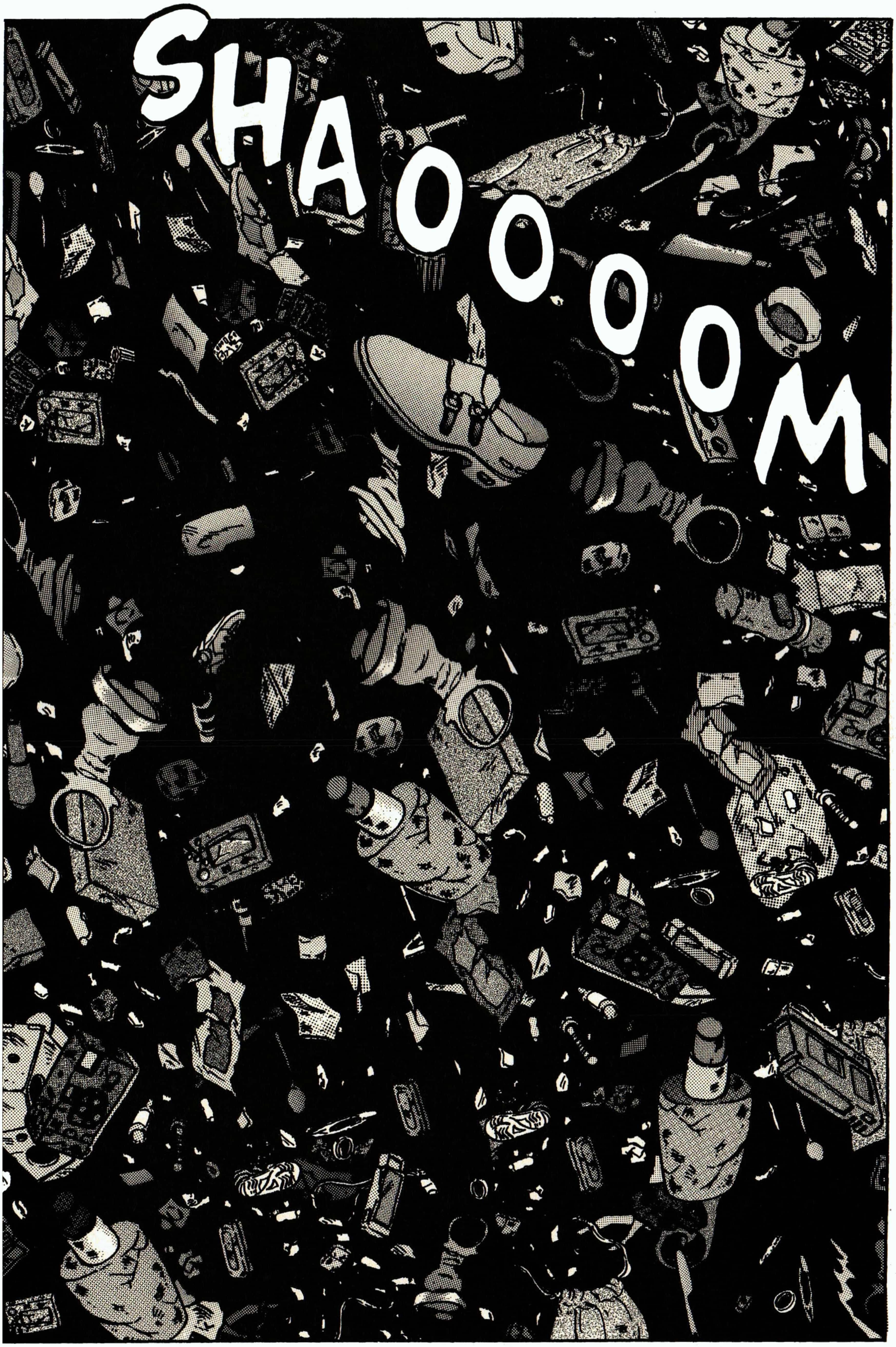
THE ANSWERS LIE BELOW, TETSURO – ON THE PLANET AT THE CENTER OF THIS!

WHAT'S ALL THIS *TRASH?!*

HAVE WE HIT SOME KIND OF INTER-STELLAR *JUNKYARD?*

galaxy express 999
松本零士
BY L. MATSUMOTO
Chapter Thirty-Eight
DISGRACE


BONK
KLNK
TONK
KREK
PLEK
THIS IS RIDICULOUS! IS THE TRAIN STATION HERE A GARBAGE CAN?!
K-R-E-SH
KUNK
WONK
TUNK
WOOOOO
CHM CHM CHM


SHAOOOOM

WO-O-O

CHMCHMCHMCHM

WOW! NOW THAT WE'RE THROUGH THE LAYER OF TRASH... THE PLANET IN THE CENTER LOOKS *BLUE* — LIKE EARTH!

IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE TRASH, IT WOULD HAVE SHINED BLUE FROM AFAR...

ERR... EXCUSE ME, BUT I MUST MAKE AN ANNOUNCEMENT. THE GALAXY EXPRESS WISHES TO APOLOGIZE FOR THAT UNSIGHTLY PART OF OUR JOURNEY.

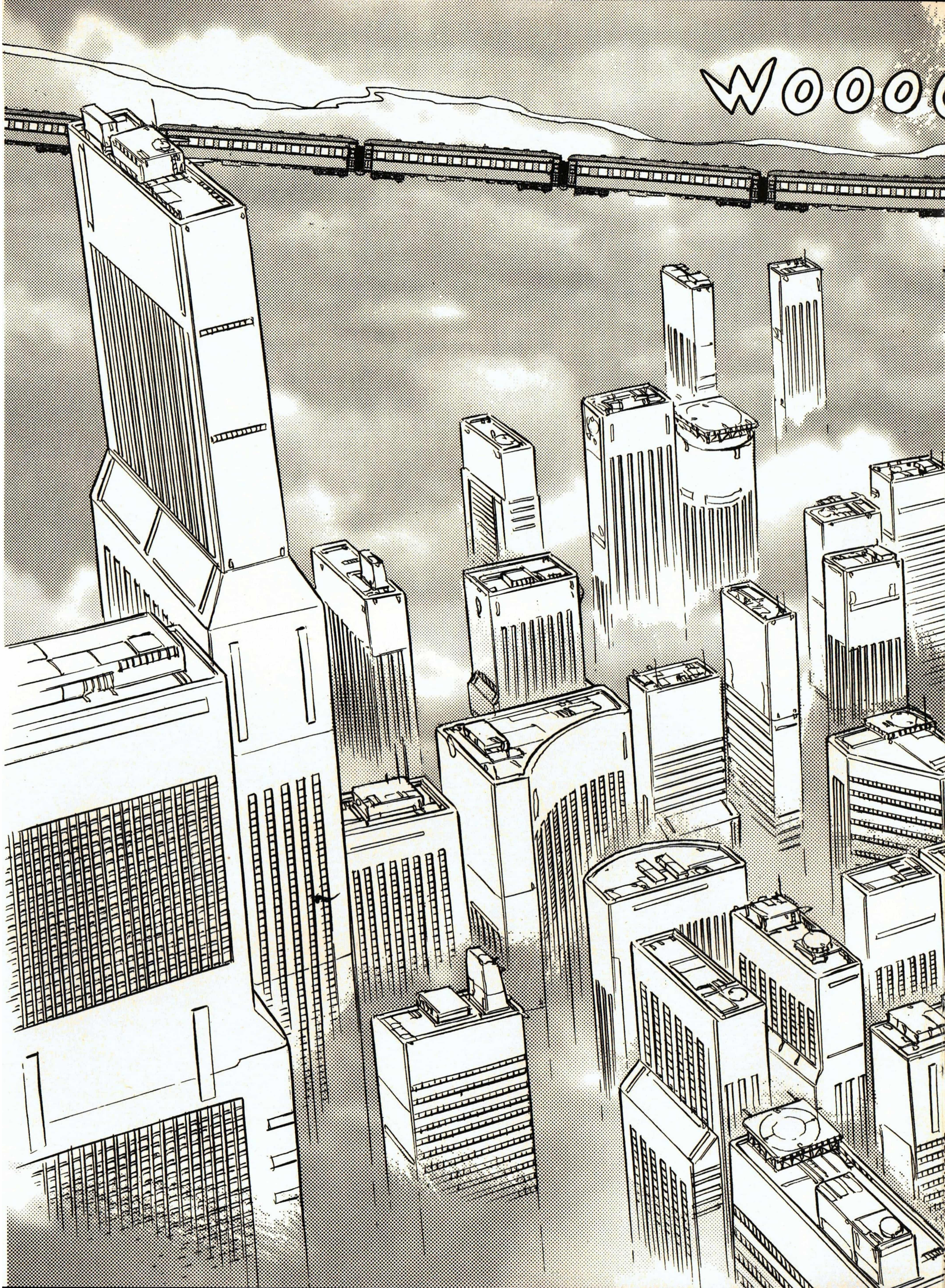
THE NEXT STOP IS PLANET YUR-UNDARAAN. OUR LAYOVER WILL BE 13 HOURS AND 13 SECONDS.

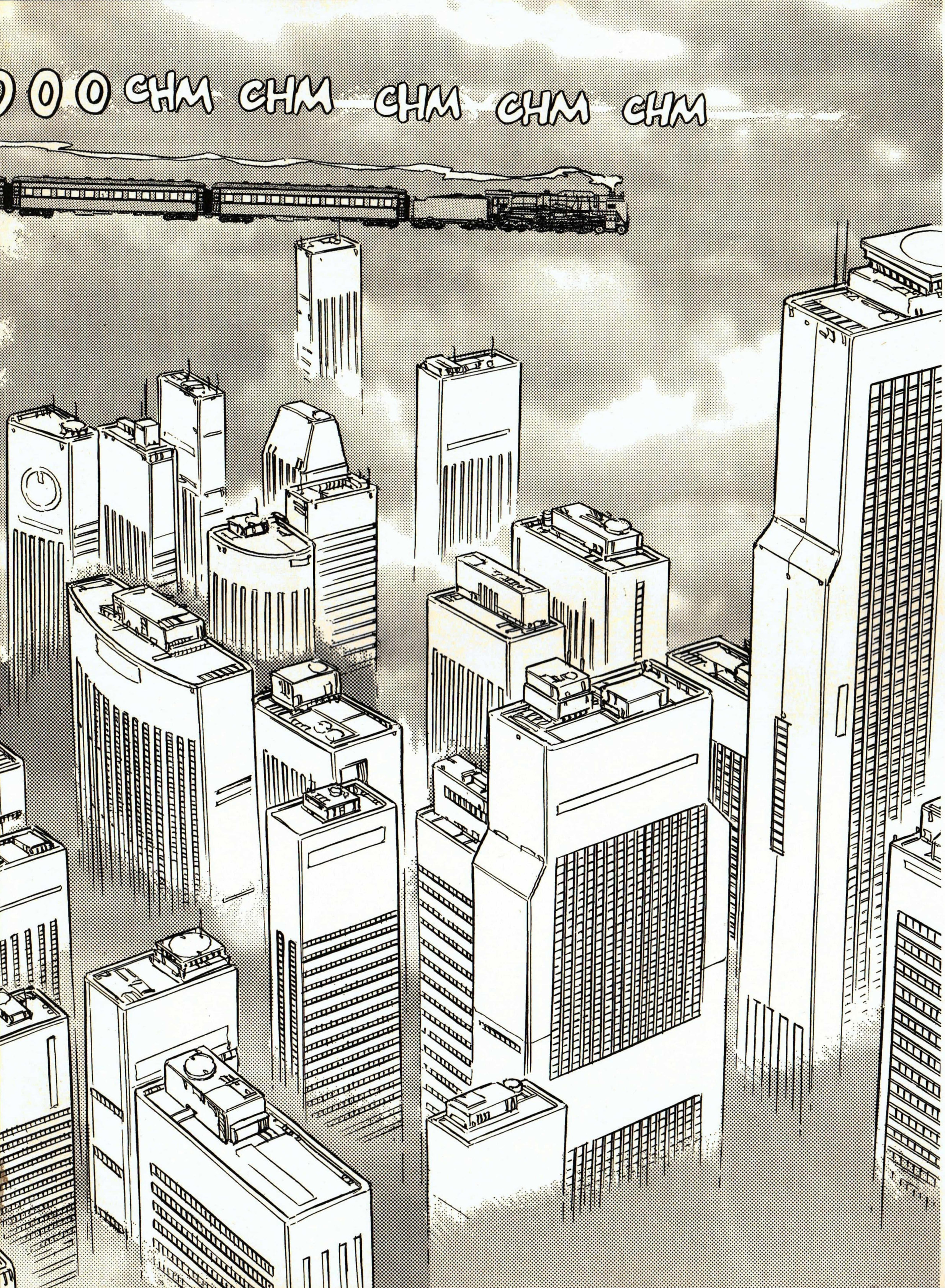
WHAT AN ICKY NAME FOR A PLANET!

IT'S AN *ICKY* PLACE... YOU'LL SEE.

IT'S THE PLANET I HATE MOST IN THE WHOLE UNIVERSE.

SHAOOOO


WOOOO


000 CHM CHM CHM CHM CHM

BUT IT LOOKS SO NEAT AND PEACEFUL...

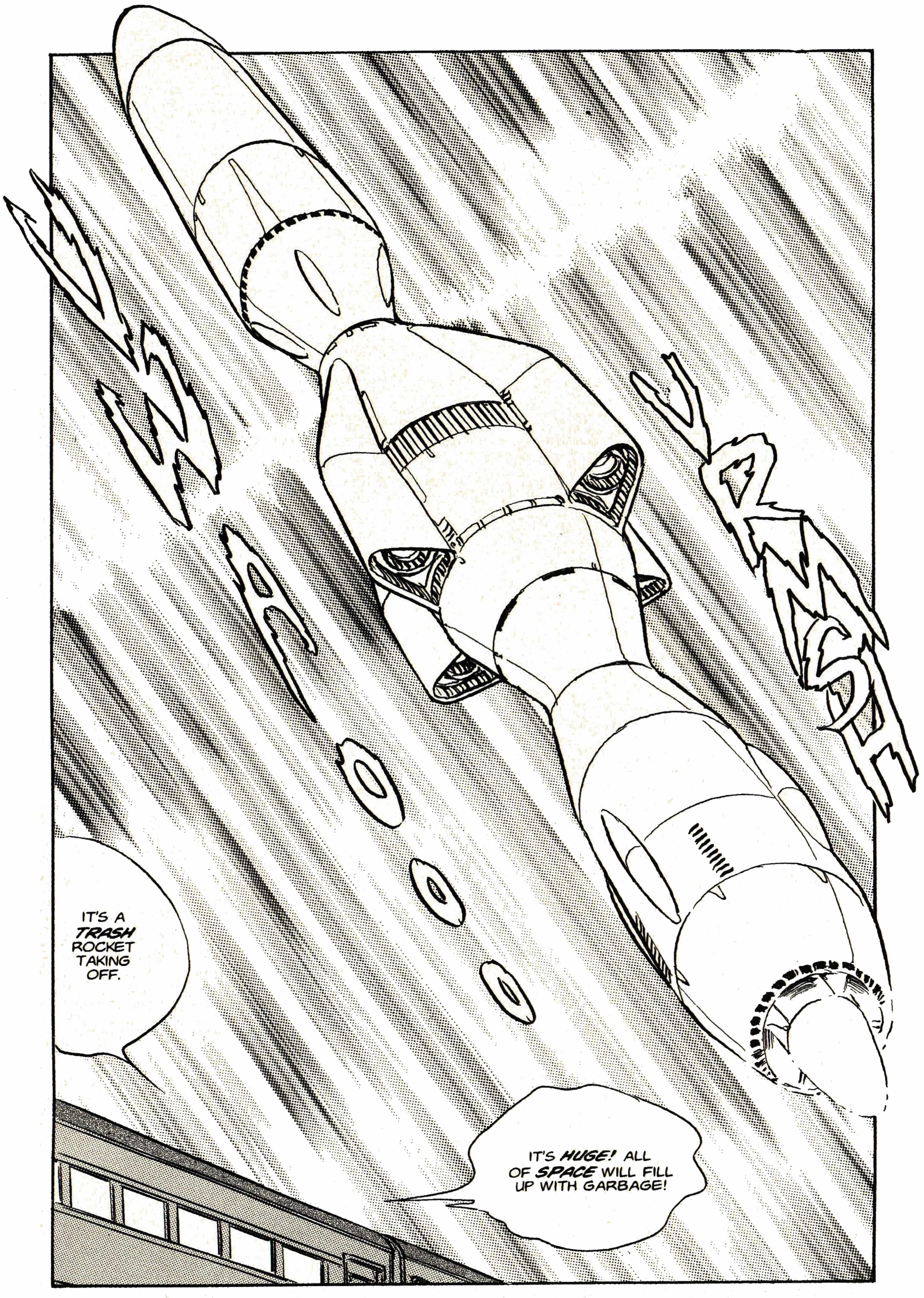
...LIKE A TWENTIETH-CENTURY METROPOLIS!

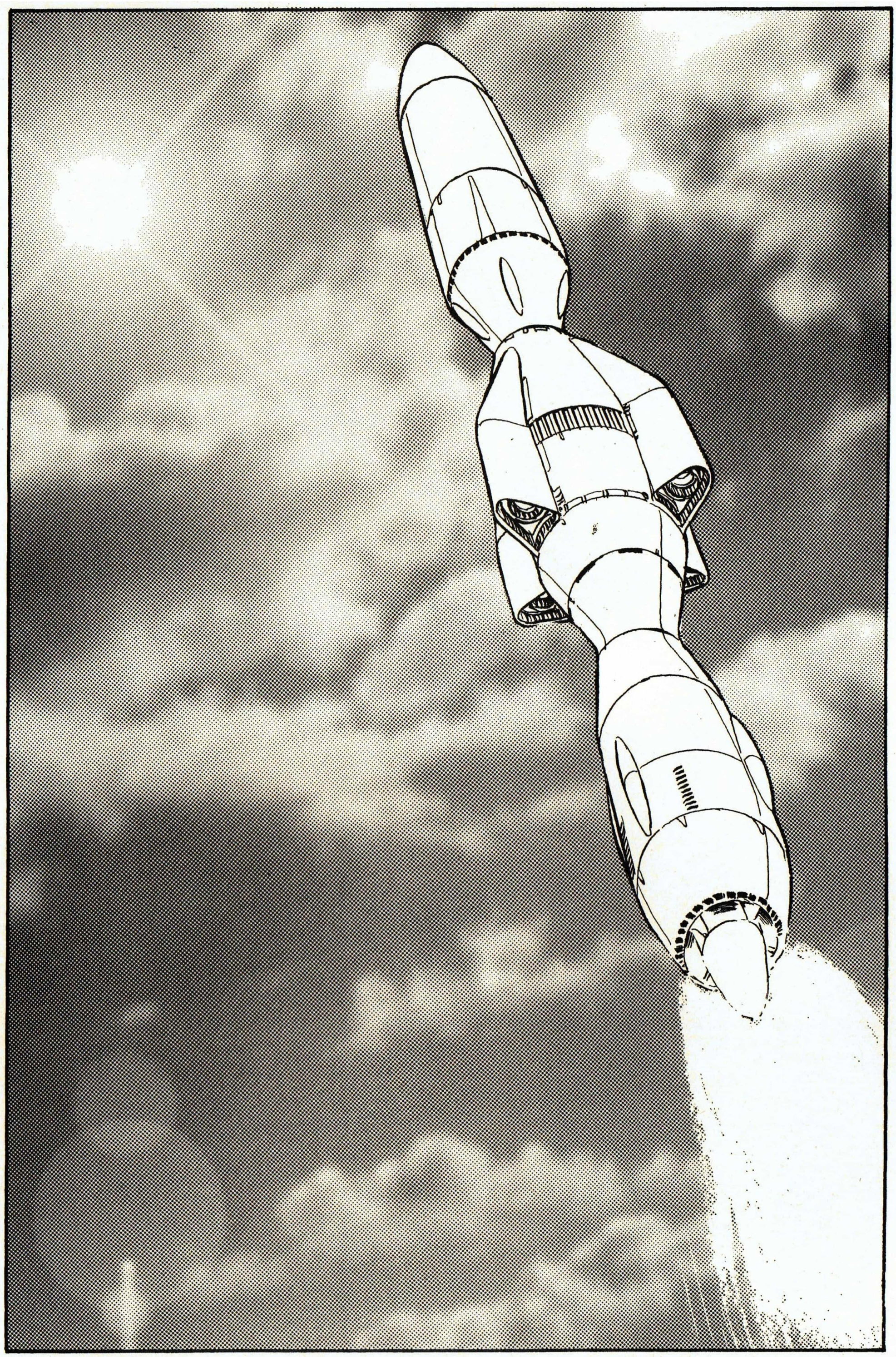
WHY DO YOU HATE THIS PLANET SO MUCH...?

IT'S NOT THE PLANET ITSELF, BUT THE PERSON WHO ***RULES*** HERE...

WHOA!

ZOOM


WHOOOOOOOOOSH
IT'S A TRASH ROCKET TAKING OFF.
IT'S HUGE! ALL OF SPACE WILL FILL UP WITH GARBAGE!



SHEEOOOMSHH

CRAKA BOOM

SO THAT'S HOW IT HAPPENED!

TO BE CONTINUED!

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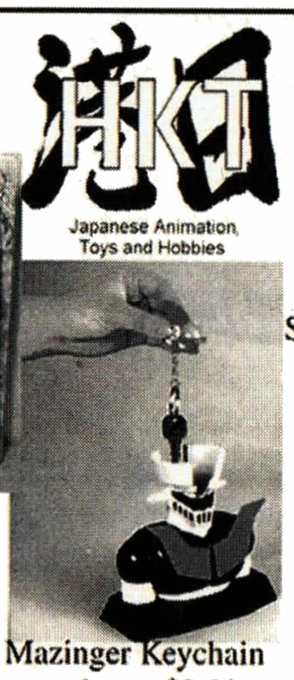

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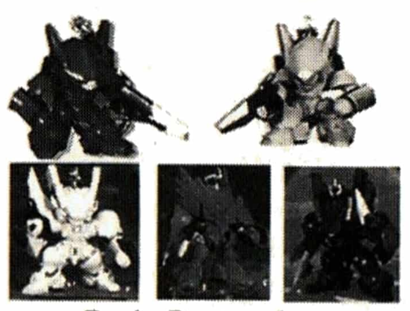

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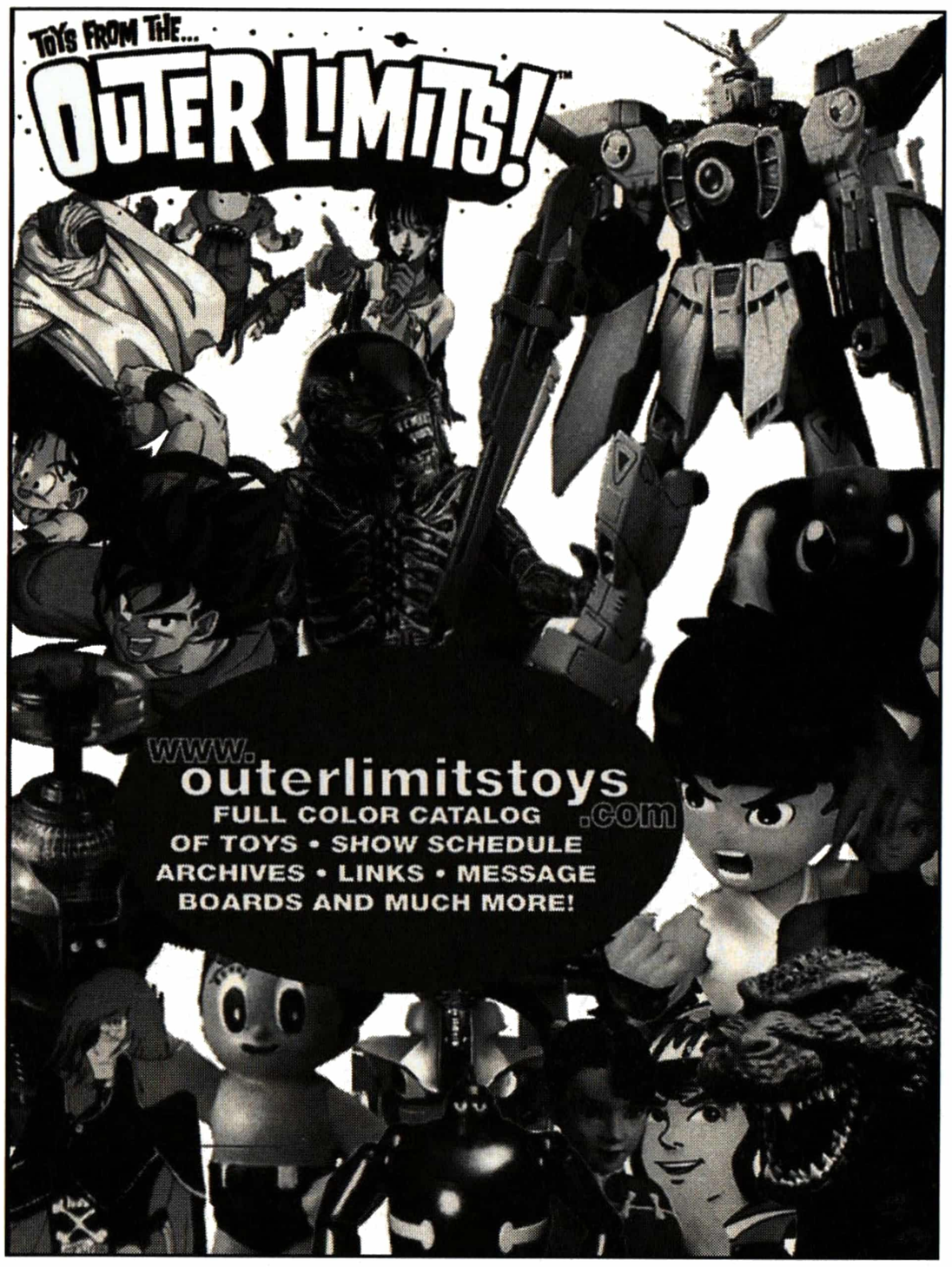

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Best of the Best

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 36)

Adam Warren's Dirty Pair

The Dirty Pair © Haruka Takachiho. The Dirty Pair: Biohazards © 1998 Adam Warren & Studio Proteus.

ANIMERICA FAN AWARDS 2001

How can you vote for your favorites in the next *ANIMERICA* Fan Awards? We'll begin polling online for the grand year-end roundup in Fall 2001, but check online for a continuing poll of your favorites for during the year!

ANIMERICA FAN AWARDS

This year's *ANIMERICA* Fan Awards were conducted on a whole new level—through an online poll filled out by hundreds of *ANIMERICA* readers over the spring and summer months. The results may surprise you! (Note that ***Gundam Wing*** had not yet begun to air on the Cartoon Network when this poll was conducted.)

Favorite Single Movie or Video

1. ***Ghost in the Shell***
2. ***Perfect Blue***
3. ***Tenchi Muyo in Love***
4. ***Grave of the Fireflies***
5. ***Macross Plus***
6. ***Sailor Moon R: The Movie***
7. ***Fatal Fury***
8. ***Pokémon: Mewtwo Strikes Back***
9. ***The Wings of Honneamise***
10. ***Ranma 1/2 the Movie 2: Nihao My Concubine***

Favorite Couple

1. Tamahome & Miaka (***Fushigi Yûgi***)
2. Vegeta & Bulma (***Dragon Ball Z***)
3. Lina & Gourry (***The Slayers***)
4. Godai & Kyoko (***Maison Ikkoku***)
5. Van & Hitomi (***Escaflowne***)
6. ***TIE!*** Kenshin & Kaoru (***Rurouni Kenshin***) AND Ash & Misty (***Pokémon***)
8. Goku & Chi-Chi (***Dragon Ball Z***)
9. Ferio & Fuu (***Magic Knight Rayearth***)
10. Yota & Ai (***Video Girl Ai***)

Favorite Mascot

1. Mokona (***Rayearth***)
2. Kero-chan (***Cardcaptors***)
3. Tama (***Fushigi Yûgi***)
4. Chu-Chu (***Utena***)
5. Shenlong (***Dragon Ball Z***)
6. Artemis (***Sailor Moon***)
7. Psyduck (***Pokémon***)
8. Pu'ar (***Dragon Ball Z***)
9. ***TIE!*** Kodama (***Princess Mononoke***) AND Jigglypuff (***Pokémon***)

Favorite Villain

1. Nakago (***Fushigi Yûgi***)
2. Sailor Galaxia (***Sailor Moon***)
3. Dilandau (***Escaflowne***)
4. Zagato (***Rayearth***)
5. Shishio Makoto (***Rurouni Kenshin***)
6. Ashram (***Record of Lodoss War***)
7. ***TIE!*** Prince Diamond (***Sailor Moon***) AND Freeza (***Dragon Ball Z***)
9. Yui (***Fushigi Yûgi***)
10. Phibrizzo (***The Slayers***)

Favorite Series

1. ***Fushigi Yûgi***
2. ***The Slayers***
3. ***The Vision of Escaflowne***
4. ***TIE! Serial Experiments Lain*** AND ***Rurouni Kenshin***
6. ***Magic Knight Rayearth***
7. ***Cowboy Bebop***
8. ***Martian Successor Nadesico***
9. ***TIE! Revolutionary Girl Utena*** AND ***Macross/Robotech***

Favorite Male Character

1. Tamahome (***Fushigi Yûgi***)
2. Son Goku (***Dragon Ball Z***)
3. Vegeta (***Dragon Ball Z***)
4. Himura Kenshin (***Rurouni Kenshin***)
5. Trunks (***Dragon Ball Z***)
6. Tasuki (***Fushigi Yûgi***)
7. Zelgadis (***The Slayers***)
8. Spike Spiegel (***Cowboy Bebop***)
9. Chichiri (***Fushigi Yûgi***)
10. Carrot (***Sorcerer Hunters***)
11. Hotohori (***Fushigi Yûgi***)
12. Van (***Escaflowne***)
13. Nuriko (***Fushigi Yûgi***)
14. Piccolo (***Dragon Ball Z***)
15. Kamui (***X***)
16. Ashitaka (***Princess Mononoke***)
17. Xellos (***The Slayers***)
18. Tylor (***Irresponsible Captain Tylor***)
19. Parn (***Record of Lodoss War***)
20. Jubei (***Ninja Scroll***)
21. James (***Pokémon***)
22. Gourry (***The Slayers***)
23. Inu-Yasha (***Inu-Yasha***)
24. Gohan (***Dragon Ball Z***)
25. Ferio (***Magic Knight Rayearth***)

Favorite Female Character

1. Lina (***The Slayers***)
2. Akane (***Ranma 1/2***)
3. Miaka (***Fushigi Yûgi***)
4. Lain (***Serial Experiments Lain***)
5. Utena (***Revolutionary Girl Utena***)
6. San (***Princess Mononoke***)
7. Hotaru/Sailor Saturn (***Sailor Moon***)
8. Ai (***Video Girl Ai***)
9. Ukyo (***Ranma 1/2***)
10. Shampoo (***Ranma 1/2***)
11. Kyoko (***Maison Ikkoku***)
12. Amy/Sailor Mercury (***Sailor Moon***)
13. Misato (***Neon Genesis Evangelion***)
14. Mina/Sailor Venus (***Sailor Moon***)
15. Raye/Sailor Mars (***Sailor Moon***)
16. Lita/Sailor Jupiter (***Sailor Moon***)
17. Alita/Gally (***Battle Angel Alita***)
18. Lime (***Saber Marionette J***)
19. Iria (***Iria: Zeiram the Animation***)
20. Hitomi (***Escaflowne***)
21. Sasami (***Tenchi Muyô!***)
22. Jessie (***Pokémon***)
23. Fuu (***Magic Knight Rayearth***)
24. Deedlit (***Record of Lodoss War***)
25. Bulma (***Dragon Ball Z***)

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

Best of the Best

HALL OF FAME

You know them and their works, and if you don't, you should. Manga and anime didn't just come into being spontaneously—they were brought to life by giants of creativity, people who began a whole new industry by doing something with a paper and pen that that no one else had done in quite that way. This section of "Best of the Best" is where we give our due to creators we feel deserve a special place in anime and manga history.

In this very first *ANIMERICA* Hall of Fame, we've selected two creators we can't even imagine the manga and anime scene without....

OSAMU TEZUKA

By **P. Duffield**

Osamu Tezuka is called the God of Manga (*Manga no Kami-sama*) with good reason. No other creator, in Japan or the world, has written a greater amount or more diverse collection of work. Tezuka penned over 150,000 pages, covering every genre and age group. His approach to comics was groundbreaking, and his success unparalleled. Without the pioneering talents of Osamu Tezuka, Japanese comics would not be what they are today.

Before Osamu Tezuka, comics in Japan were primarily gag strips and seldom more than a page or two long. The backgrounds and characters were frequently flat, the panels rectangular, the action confined, the characters entering from the left or right as though on a stage. Osamu Tezuka changed all that. He wrote *stories*. His settings and characters had depth seldom seen in earlier manga. Influenced by international films, his panels had cinematic scope and complexity which set the course for the future of manga. When there was action, it was visually dynamic, often spanning several panels and unhindered by its framework. Tezuka was an innovator and master of what Scott McCloud (***Understanding Comics***) refers to as "aspect to aspect" transitions, where a moment or setting is divided into multiple panels used to impart a mood or sense of place. It's the kind of transition you might see in movies, but seldom in comics outside of Japan. In short, Tezuka was a master and pioneer of visual storytelling, but artistic technique alone does not make you a god.

Some of the best-known, and best-loved anime characters of all time were created by Tezuka. ***Tetsuwan Atom*** (***Astro Boy***), ***Jungle Taitei*** (***Kimba the White Lion***), ***Umi no Triton*** ("Triton of the Sea") and ***Unico*** are just a few of his characters to find fame both in Japan and abroad. These charming characters and their thoughtful adventures have delighted children and adults around the world. With over 150 titles covering 400 volumes, however, there's more to Tezuka than cute, brave heroes who made it into animation.

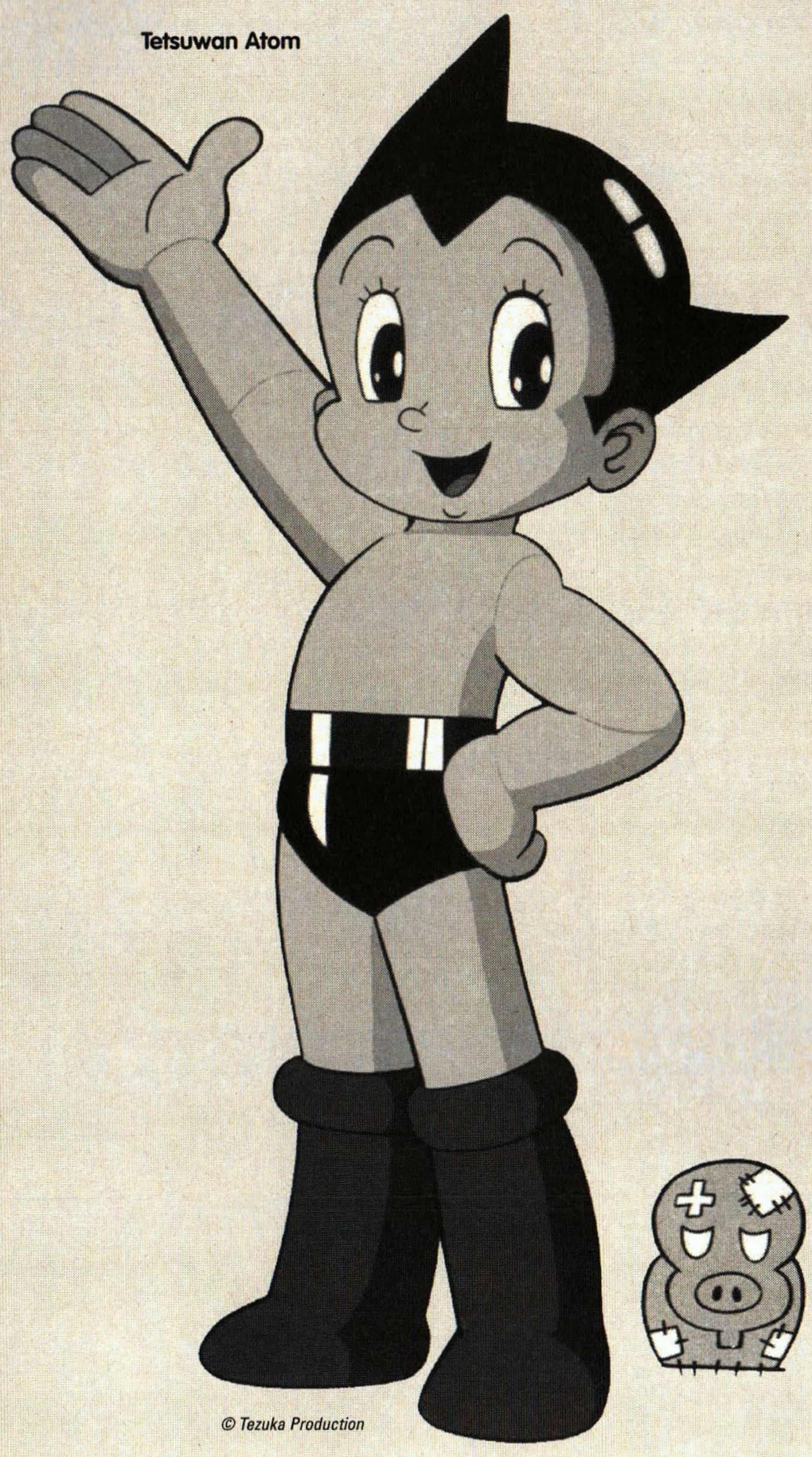
Tezuka was a pioneer, and he constantly pushed the medium of both comics and animation. No topic was too extreme to be put to pen. The medical and psychological challenges faced in graphic detail by the rogue surgeon of ***Black Jack*** are just one example of Tezuka's sincere interest in all facets of humanity, from the physical to the spiritual. In ***Hi no Tori*** ("Phoenix"), the timeless collection of stories which revolve around the bird who is always reborn through fire and whose blood can grant immortality, Tezuka examines many universal social issues, complex scientific theories, and aspects of religion. ***Phoenix*** is accredited as being Tezuka's life work and understandably so. Despite the complexities of the topics explored, he is able to convey ideas as sophisticated as reincarnation and DNA with a simple grace that makes even the most difficult of concepts accessible to any reader. He does all this *and* makes the stories profoundly engaging and meaningful at the same time. This is one of the reasons ***Phoenix***, along with ***Buddha***, ***Black Jack*** and ***Adolf***, can be found in many high school and public libraries in Japan.

Tezuka was cosmopolitan; he was inspired by the whole world. Dostoyevsky's epic ***Crime and Punishment,*** Greek mythology, China's legendary ***Saiyûki*** ("Journey to the West"), and ***One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*** are a few of the classic global works he brought to life in manga. Many historic figures, including Adolf Hitler, Faust, and Cleopatra, found their way into Tezuka's writing. These imported story ideas range from the kid-friendly comic ***Boku no Son Goku*** ("My Son Goku") to the strictly adult film ***Cleopatra***.

It's almost impossible to write about Tezuka and not mention ***Ribon no Kishi*** (***Princess Knight***), which is generally considered the first modern *shôjo* (girls') manga. The series is about Princess Sapphire who, because girls can't succeed to the throne, is raised as a boy. This story of adventure and romance would later inspire female artists to enter into the manga field, breaking the earlier tradition of sweet, simplistic *shôjo* manga. Naturally, ***Princess Knight*** is not Tezuka's only *shôjo* comic; others include ***Niji no Toride*** ("Rainbow Fort"), ***Angel no Oka*** ("Angel's Hill"), and the beginning of ***Phoenix***.

Many U.S. fans are aware of Tezuka's interest in science fiction and fantasy, thanks to such titles as ***Astro Boy*** and ***Unico***, but few are aware he embraced the genre of horror with equal enthusiasm. ***Dororo*** is the tale of Hyakkimaru, whose father promised parts of his unborn son to powerful demons in exchange for worldly power. Wormlike at birth, Hyakkimaru is found and raised by a talented doctor and learns to live with prosthetic limbs. Because his magical past draws demons to him like moths to flame, he eventually leaves his adopted father and learns that if he kills the demons who possess his body parts, he'll gain them back. So, after unintentionally acquiring a sidekick named Dororo, Hyakkimaru sets out to get his body back, one demon at a time. On the lighter side is ***Mitsume ga Tôru*** ("The Three-Eyed One"), the story of Sharaku, a three-eyed, evil genius with supernatural powers who, when his third eye is covered, becomes innocent (and clueless) as a lamb. Wato, Sharaku's tomboy girlfriend, protects Sharaku when he's innocent and uncovers his third eye in times of need. Naturally, she always has a sticky patch handy to recover his third eye. ***Vampire*** (despite its name, it's about werewolves), ***Don Dracula*** and ***Onimaru Taishô*** ("General Demon") are merely a few of Tezuka's other tales of the supernatural.

Born in 1928, Osamu Tezuka grew up in an increasingly national-



istic country, one soon controlled by a zealous military bent on imperialism. Growing up during WWII, Tezuka gained a profound appreciation for the value of life, not just human life but all life, even the insects he'd been fascinated with since boyhood. This respect for life can be seen throughout his stories. Guided by his family's wishes, Tezuka studied to become a medical doctor. By 1951 he had graduated from medical school, but not before being published as a comic artist. In the end, he embraced the creative medium which had captivated him since his youth and became a professional comic artist, later opening the animation studio Mushi Pro. His diverse work in both fields has earned him numerous awards and inspired artists throughout Japan and the world. Osamu Tezuka died in 1989, and the comic world mourned his loss. Since then, The Osamu Tezuka Manga Museum opened in Takarazuka, Osaka, and plans for a Tezuka World theme park have been set into motion. Perhaps in the future, tourists to Japan will be able to choose between Micky Mouse and Astro Boy, two characters of equal fame. ☆

GO NAGAI

By **Patrick Macias**

If, as they say, Osamu Tezuka is the "God of Manga," then Go Nagai could be the little red guy with the pitchfork and horns.

This isn't meant to suggest that Nagai is some kind of cornball ultimate evil in the ***End of Days*** sense, or even (like one of his characters) a Devilman. Rather, it's tempting to think of him as a playfully naughty trickster, blowing off authority and cracking taboos like so many walnuts.

Go Nagai's boundless imagination is both thoroughly fertile and totally infantile. His work appeals to the perverse inner child in all of us. Maybe that's why Nagai has managed to a.) stay almost absurdly youthful over the years and b.) why he's been one of anime and manga's most popular and internationally recognized artists.

Countless toys of his super-robot Great Mazinger were sold under the ***Shogun Warriors*** banner in the U.S. in the '70s, while in Europe, Nagai's ***UFO Robo Grendizer*** anime series broke television viewing records when screened as ***Goldorak***.

Yet for all of Go Nagai's many accomplishments (we're talking something like over 160 different manga titles alone, published in over 580 editions) Nagai is currently consigned to almost "cult figure" status among today's anime fans who may know the hand-me-down imitators better than the original bad boy himself.

Videos of Nagai anime adaptations like ***The Abashiri Family, Cutey Honey, Hanappe Bazooka***, and ***Shuten Dôji*** are widely available, but have hardly been embraced as bestsellers. Beautifully designed ***Devilman*** action figures dot import toy shelves, but tend to be more admired from afar than actually snapped up.

But that's okay, because Nagai is far from a flavor of the month. Better yet, he's a pervasive ever-present influence. Over the course of a 30-year-plus career, Nagai has created entire genres with a wave of his manga brush. The very notion of a transforming giant robot has its roots in Nagai's series ***Getter Robo***. Busty, scantily clad super-gals owe their bra straps to ***Cutey Honey***. Postapocalyptic action heroes like Kenshiro from ***Fist of the North Star*** must bow down and grovel before ***Violence Jack***. Think parodies of magical-girl shows like ***Jubei-chan*** are cutting edge? ***Dororon Enma-kun*** did it first. And even ***La Blue Girl*** and ***Urotsuki Dôji*** must give a tip of the ol' tentacle to Nagai's fearless dark side. (Well, nobody said he was always an *good* influence!)

Go Nagai was born in 1945 in Wajima in the Ishikawa Prefecture. An autobiographical manga published in the retrospective book ***The Psychic World of Go Nagai*** depicts a child obsessed with manga and sleepless nights tormented by characters and creations that would soon spring to life.

In 1965, one year after graduating from high school, the aspiring artist fell under the guidance of prolific manga author Shotaro Ishinomori (creator of ***Cyborg 009*** and ***Kamen Rider***, then, just known as "Ishimori"), himself a former disciple of Osamu Tezuka. Nagai learned the ropes of the manga racket as Ishinomori's tireless assistant before making his solo debut in 1967 with the gag strip ***Meakishi Poligichi*** in *Bokura* magazine.

In 1968 came the inflammatory ***Harenchi Gakuen***, or "Shameless School," a wild comedy about oversexed students and grotesque teachers conspiring to spy on each other in the nude; plans that usually ended up with everyone being beaten senseless by bamboo *kendo* sticks. Coveted by the readers of *Shônen Jump* magazine, it drew fire

(Continued on Next Page)

Best of the Best

Devilman

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

from a prudish Japanese Parents and Teachers Association (PTA). Although the outcry effectively ended the series, it also turned Nagai from a relative unknown into a cause célèbre overnight.

In 1970, Nagai took his first major step towards world domination with the founding of his Dynamic Productions, a corporate team of artists and businessmen all devoted to making Go's creative concepts a reality.

1972's ***Devilman*** set the standard for Nagai and Dynamic's multimedia attacks, which used a bit of sheep's clothing to disguise the slavering wolf. A bright and colorful ***Devilman*** series, intended for young viewers, was released to TV, while a heavy-on-the-blood-and breasts ***Devilman*** manga hit 'em hard in the pages of *SHÔNEN* magazine.

Already upwardly mobile, Nagai gained the Midas Touch with the one-two rocket punch of 1972's ***Mazinger Z*** manga and anime series. Here, he partially updated the scenario of Mitsuteru Yokoyama's old ***Tetsujin 28-go*** (known in the U.S. as ***Gigantor***)—you know, young lad controls giant robot—with a crucial difference. Instead of giving kids a protagonist who fiddled with a remote control, Nagai put his impetuous wild-haired hero directly inside the Mazinger Z (the show finally turned up in the U.S.A. in the mid-'80s, by which point Nagai's work looked far less than innovative that it actually was.)

Pushing the destruction and mayhem to levels that only ***Godzilla*** had induced before, Nagai cranked out sequels (***Great Mazinger, Grendizer***) and spawned legions of imitators. ***Mazinger Z*** alone inspired the famed Chogokin line of die-cast metal toys, whose success made the marketing of deluxe doodads mandatory for future anime and live-action shows.

Meanwhile, Nagai kept pumping out the manga and even branched out into directing live-action films, like 1990's ***The Ninja Dragon*** (available from Asia Pulp Cinema). There were also periodic attempts to invade America on his own terms. Marvel's old *EPIC ILLUSTRATED* magazine published a lengthy profile and ran an original story. First Publishing issued a stunning color album simply called ***Mazinger***. Dour rocker Glenn Danzig published three issues of a ***Shin Devilman*** ("New Devilman") side story comic under his Verotik label.

Today Go Nagai's Euro-publishing arm, Dynamic Italia, partially controls the flow of manga across the Continent. A recent revival of ***Devilman*** in Japan has led to new manga and anime (like ***Amon*** and ***Devilman Lady***), toys, video games, and even clothing lines. The original super-robots remain as in-demand as ever as a flood of limited-edition toys and models can attest. And Nagai's manga (which perhaps reached its artistic apex with the 1973-1992 saga ***Violence Jack:*** a Sadean tapestry that neatly ties together nearly all the characters and themes found in his work.) remains consistently in print.

Currently, here in the U.S.A., there's plenty of Go to go around. Like the ***Devilman*** OAVs, ***The Abashiri Family, Cutey Honey, Hanappe Bazooka***, and ***Shuten Dôji*** to name a few. Try some. You might like them...or at least be weirded out by them. Also, ADV Films is preparing a stateside release of ***Shin Getter Robo***, perhaps the best Nagai-affiliated anime in years. There's truly no end in sight. And whatever supernatural force keeps Go Nagai alive and creating wildly entertaining visions of anarchy and chaos, it hasn't run out of steam yet.

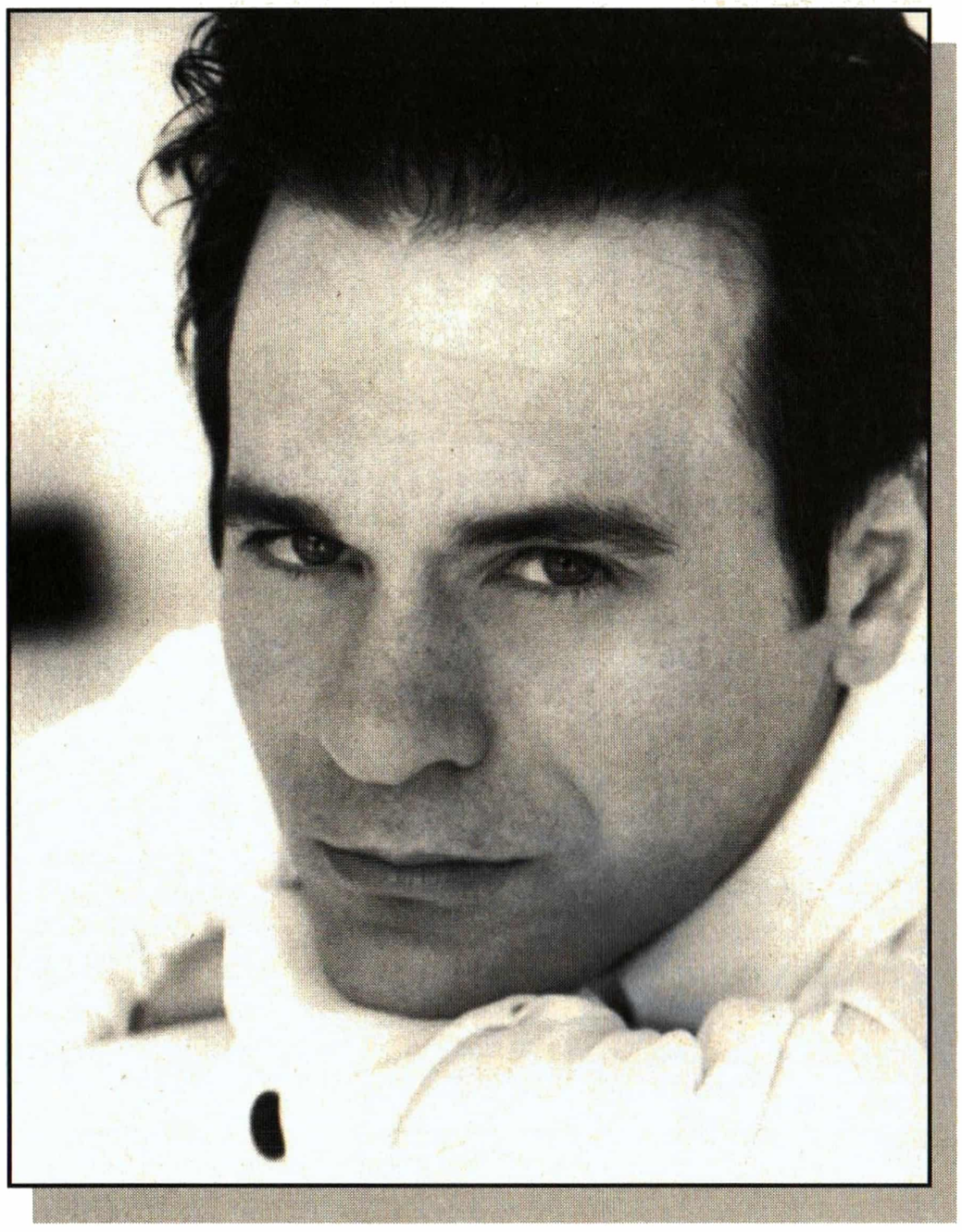
So give the devil his due already. ☆

© Dynamic Pro

anime + focus — SOUND BITES

Joshua Seth

Interview by Benjamin Wright



JOSHUA SETH
SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

ANIMATION VOICE-OVER
Anemia & Iodine: Dropsy
Digimon (the series): Tai, Young Tai, Motimon, Pabumon, Tentomon
Digimon the Movie: Tai, Young Tai
DNA Sights: Daiba
Honeybee Hutch: Hutch
Journey To The Heart of The World: Kim
Super Pig: Super Pig's brother
Wild Seven: Ryogoku
Teknoman, Eagle Riders

LIVE-ACTION FILM & TV VOICE-OVER
Jingle All The Way, Chaplin, Encino Man, Leave It to Beaver, She's All That, Starship Troopers, Everybody Loves Raymond (announcer), Buffy the Vampire Slayer, 7th Heaven, The Pretender, Cracker, Profiler, Evening Shade, Quints, The Crying Child

COMMERCIALS
Fox Kids Promos, WB TV Promos, Shell Oil, Coke, Star Wars, Disneyland, Bell Wireless, Outback Steakhouse, Ice Capades, Full House, Mountain Dew, Universal Studios, Publix, Ford Explorer, FAO Schwartz, Boreal, Southwestern Bell, Nordic Mist, The Army, Pacific Bell, Wherehouse Music, Bandai, Doritos

All images for Digimon © 1999 Toei Animation Co., Ltd.

Joshua Seth is an entertainer in the old-school sense. He's a well-trained singer, voice-over artist, and magician. He doesn't feel that his day is complete unless he's performed in some way, be it by doing stand-up in a club in his home town of Los Angeles, by doing magic somewhere in the country, by acting in front of the camera, or by doing voices for cartoons like ***Digimon: Digital Monsters***.

Considering his pivotal role in that show—he does the voice of the series' hero, Tai, as well as those of the digital monsters Motimon and Pabumon—we were eager to talk to him about the show and his career. We interviewed Seth over the phone, while he was driving to a recording studio to do some voice-over work. Given his involvement in ***Digimon***, our first question was to determine if he himself is an anime fan.

"Oh yeah, I started becoming interested in anime when I was a film student at NYU," Seth explained. "I saw ***Akira*** in a theater, and that was just awesome! I looked at it and I thought 'Wow, this is the future of animation.'" This turned out to be a defining time for Seth, as he started doing voice work at the university's 50,000-watt radio station. "We had a program called Headphone Theater, where the students would write bedtime stories for kids. I would do most of the voices. I started out just doing the kids, and then I'd do the dragon, and the villain.... That's how I developed my voices."

Seth already had a familiarity with radio, however. "When I was growing up in Ohio, my dad was a radio psychologist—sorta like Frasier before ***Frasier***—and by tagging along with him every once in a while I became familiar with radio stations and recording studios and such." After college, armed with his assortment of voices, Joshua moved out to Los Angeles. "I got an agent right away and started doing commercials—All the 'Mom! Dad! Can we go to Disneyland?' kinda commercials," he laughed.

Since then, Seth has been involved in dozens of anime dubs. "I've done lead characters in a lot of stuff. I only put down about a third of my credits on my web site, though, because otherwise it'd be obnoxiously long," he said. "A lot of the animation stuff I don't even credit myself on. I put fake names down because, like, who cares? They care in Japan, but nobody cares in the United States." The people who read this article would probably disagree, but Seth was quick to add, "but of course I credit myself on ***Digimon*** because that's a big thing."

How, then, did Seth come to be involved with ***Digimon?*** He had a good story to tell: "Well, the producers at Saban already knew of me because I'd voiced the lead character in ***Honeybee Hutch*** a few years ago," Seth said. "He was a little guy, but it was a pretty big series...like 54 episodes or something...so I got to know a lot of people and they got to know what I could do. When another series came up last year, they called me in to voice its lead character, and that's when Rita Acosta (who was ***Digimon***'s producer at the time) said 'you'll probably be coming in to audition for ***Digimon*** at the same time.'"

"I said 'What? What's ***Digimon?***" Seth continued, "and then the freaking out started... 'What!? Nobody called you in!? Oh my god, wait a second, hang on...I can't believe they didn't call you in, oh no!' Unfortunately, it turned out that the ***Digimon*** auditions had ended the day before. So what happened was, while I was recording for this pilot episode (whose show never actually went anywhere), I just laid something down on tape. None of the Fox brass was there, none of the producers were there, nobody was there. So I was just goofing off, fooling around, making jokes and stuff...Y'know, kinda making fun of the project. I thought it was a lost cause anyway!"

"Well, when Terry O'Malley heard that tape, she said, 'Hey, that's the guy!'. I wasn't even using any of my special voices, it was just my normal personality. That's who they

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

anime + focus

SOUND BITES

Joshua Seth

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

Send Fan Mail To:

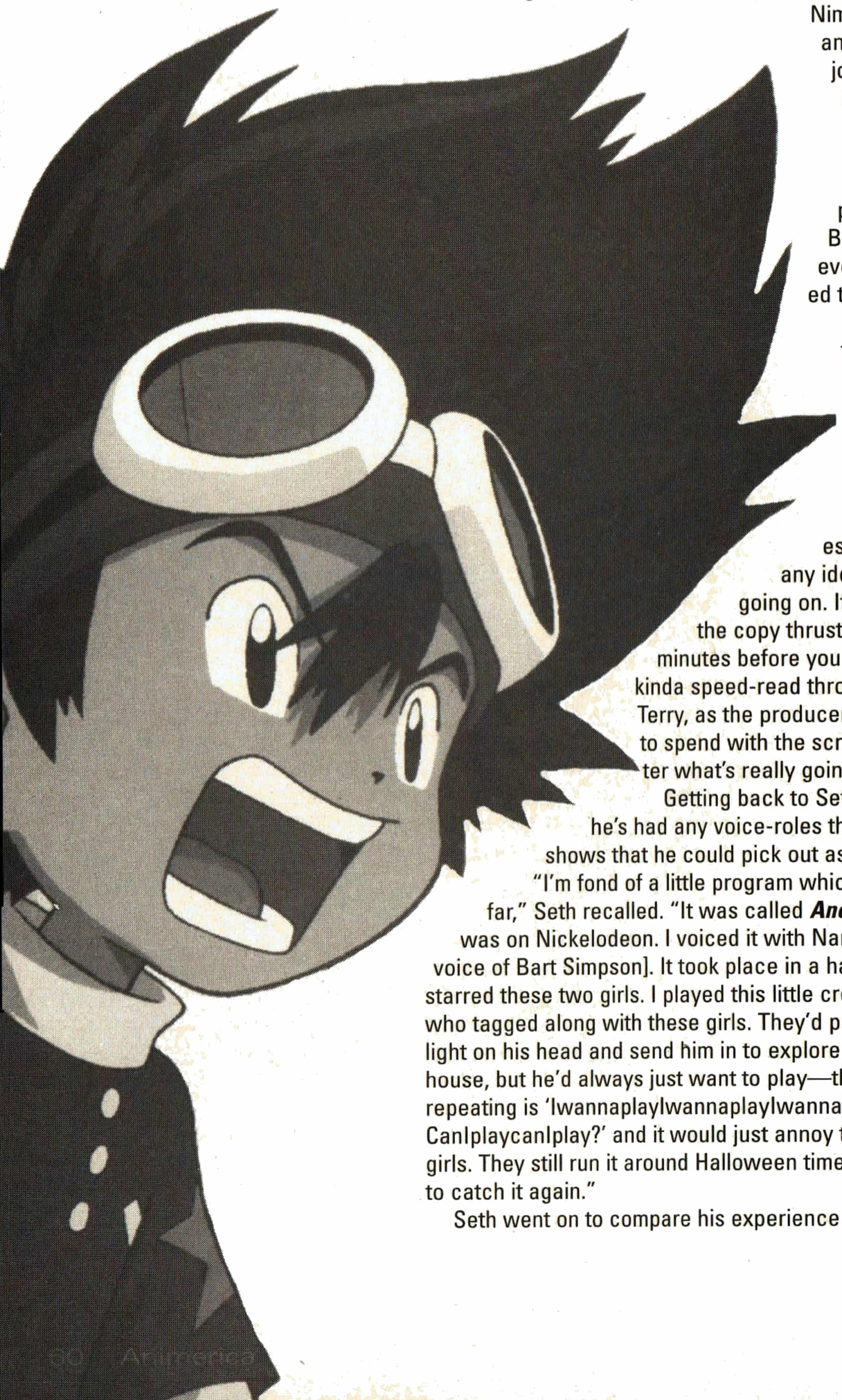
Joshua Seth

Joshua Seth c/o Arlene
Thornton & Assoc.
12711 Ventura Blvd.,
Suite #490
Studio City, CA 91604

wanted for Tai, because I have a lot in common with the character of Tai." Seth explained that once he was on board the project, he took some initiative on his own. "Once I saw the story and where it was going, I thought I'd raise the pitch of Tai's voice a bit and make him sound a little younger for the first season, so that in the second season I could use my normal voice for the character."

Many fans might be interested to know if, in preparation for voicing Tai, Seth ever checked out how the original Japanese *seiyû* (voice-actor) played him. Seth was earnest in his response: "No, I've never heard any of the original voices on it," he said, "and I kinda like it that way. I don't wanna try to make myself sound like somebody else; Id rather bring what I have to the part in as original a fashion as possible. Besides, I'd just be trying to imitate something I can't be anyway."

Aside from doing the voices of Tai, Motimon, and Pabumon, Seth also did the voice of Tentomon for the first couple of episodes. That wasn't to last long, however. "I was doing too many voices! They had trouble scheduling me, because I also do other series, plus commercials and promos and things, so they had to bring somebody else in. They ended up bringing in Jeff Nimoy to do Tentomon, and he does a great job." As it happens, Nimoy would soon go on to write about half of the series' episodes with his partner, Bob Buckholdt. They've even written and directed the movie.



The more we spoke to Seth, the more hectic the task of dubbing ***Digimon*** was sounding. He agreed. "When we go in to do the voices, we don't really have any idea what the heck is going on. It's just like, you get the copy thrust in front of you five minutes before you start recording it, and kinda speed-read through it, whatever. Terry, as the producer, has a lot more time to spend with the script, so she knows better what's really going on."

Getting back to Seth, we asked him if he's had any voice-roles that he's done for other shows that he could pick out as his favorite?

"I'm fond of a little program which never really went far," Seth recalled. "It was called ***Anemia & Iodine***, and was on Nickelodeon. I voiced it with Nancy Cartwright [the voice of Bart Simpson]. It took place in a haunted house and starred these two girls. I played this little creature called Dropsy who tagged along with these girls. They'd put a little miner's flashlight on his head and send him in to explore this spooky haunted house, but he'd always just want to play—the line he'd keep repeating is 'IwannaplayIwannaplayIwannaPLAY! (gigglegiggle) CanIplaycanIplay?' and it would just annoy the heck out of the girls. They still run it around Halloween time, so you might be able to catch it again."

Seth went on to compare his experience with ***Anemia & Iodine*** to working on anime dubs. "***Anemia & Iodine*** was very cool because it was original animation," he remarked. "I was doing all kinds of physical gestures in the recording booth, and those mannerisms ended up making it into the animation itself. That's one nice thing about voicing original animation—you have more sway over how the character eventually gets represented on the screen. Dubbing anime is actually a lot more difficult than original animation—there are so many restrictions!"

Forgetting about anime and traditional cartoons for a moment, we asked Seth if there are any voice-acting roles out there that he'd really love to do?

"I'd love to do ***Harry Potter***, if they ever animate that," he chimed. "I dunno if that'll happen, cause they're doing the live action movie, of course. But ultimately I want to get known on-camera, in TV and movies. In fact, I was just in the ***Hollywood Reporter*** last week—I signed with a kinda hot agent and they ran a blurb on me. The on-camera stuff is what I really need to starting pushing, and actually it's kinda being pushed for me now. I have a really good team working for me—the press response has actually been quite good, so hopefully things will start moving more in that direction."

If Seth's plans work out the way he wants, the industry may soon be short one very talented voice-over artist. However, that would make room for other aspiring voice-actors. We asked Seth for any tips he might have for those who want to break into the business.

"In terms of becoming a voice-actor," he said, "there are two things that I always tell people. Beyond, that is, having the burning desire to do it to the point that nobody can stop you from doing it, which you absolutely need, cause it's a long, hard road.... First of all, you need to be vocally trained. I can't stress enough the need to take singing and vocal lessons so that you don't damage your voice." This was news to us, and he was glad to elaborate.

"A lot of voice-actors that aren't trained can tend to do that," he said, "especially when voicing kids, who are always making all these kinda weird sounds with their voices. It's a career where you're making those funny sounds for hours and hours at a time and I always want people to know that we never do that in a way which could hurt our voices. The way we're able to do that is by having proper voice training. So if it's something you want to get into, make sure you have a good background in voice training and in singing. That really will help to keep you healthy, and will help you to do what you're capable of doing—to access all the notes in your instrument, so to speak."

"The voice-actors who are real pros know this," Seth continued. "The people who don't know this often find out that voice-acting can be very rough on your vocal cords. For example, right now I'm in front of a studio and I'm gonna walk in and narrate a project. Then I'll drive up to another studio to dub an anime project, and then I have an audition for an animated project at Cartoon Network. Then, who knows? They might need me for something on ***Digimon*** later in the day. It's like 'bam-bam-bam,' different voices all day long. You have to keep yourself in good health and take care of your voice when you're doing all these crazy sounds."

So what's the other thing you always tell aspiring voice-actors? "Just to be an interesting person!" he quipped. "As an entertainer, and especially one in animation, the more interesting a person you are, the more you have to bring to a role."

Be sure to check out Joshua Seth's web site at www.joshuaseth.com for behind-the-scenes ***Digimon: The Movie*** stuff, as well as information on his magic show schedules. ☆

The story of one man's escape to the Land of the Rising Sun....

Geoffrey Tebbetts'

DIARIES OF THE COUNTRY BUMPKIN

OCTOBER 4TH, 2000
THE BIG SPORTS FESTIVAL

You are all probably tired of anything related to the Olympics right now, but what sports do you think of when you think of Japan? You could state the obvious and look at the medals won by Japan—they only like sports like judo, baseball, and sumo wrestling, right?

Boy, you are so wrong if you think that.

Among the sports in Japan, baseball and sumo do dominate, but let's not overlook the other sports. Soccer is bigger than you may think here, especially with the World Cup coming in 2002. Volleyball, tennis, and basketball are popular clubs in school. The Olympics themselves have left a profound mark on Japan. Track-and-field and swimming are covered widely during the Olympics, and there's even a holiday that marks the date when the Olympics opened in Tokyo in 1964. You could also point at the various sport anime and manga there—don't tell me you haven't heard of ***Slam Dunk*** or ***Captain Tsubasa***?

Probably the most interesting event that reflects Japan's love of sports and competition is the yearly "Sports Festival," or *undôkai*, that happens in schools during a weekend in the school year. The festival is usually a day-long competition in which the entire school is split into two or more teams, and each team participates in a handful of events. It's like any other track-and-field competition; the team with the most points at the end of the day wins.

The Matsuyama Junior High School *undôkai* began during a scorching Sunday in August. The students were split into two teams, red and white, the usual colors for any two-team event. This particular *undôkai* was more Olympic than anything—the students marched onto the field and waited as members of the school staff addressed them. Last year's trophy was given back to the principal, and the games began!

Also like the Olympics, a good amount of the competition involved running, jumping, and throwing—typical events such as the 100-meter sprint, the long jump, and the mini-marathon were done. However, not all of the events in the *undôkai* are meant to be serious. Students also competed in out-of-the-ordinary events, such as a three-legged race with parents, a large game of tug-of-war, and a game that involved capturing your opponent's headband while being towed around by three other teammates. The most interesting event was a team-wide cheering segment, in which the teams did a four-minute cheer, complete with pom-poms and J-pop music. The staff can also get involved with some races, but I wouldn't advise it if you're out of shape (like me—I had sore knees for two weeks!)

Probably the most impressive spectacle I saw was the level of team and school spirit I saw during the festival. The teams cheered on their teammates with loud drums and large banners, and the cheering did not stop as the judges totalled up the points. Both teams went into frenzies at the end that involved shakers and buckets of cold water dumped over people's heads. The cheers didn't even end after the individual and team awards were passed out—even if the team had lost, they celebrated. It might have been delirium caused by the intense heat, but I could sense a great deal of pride in the students.

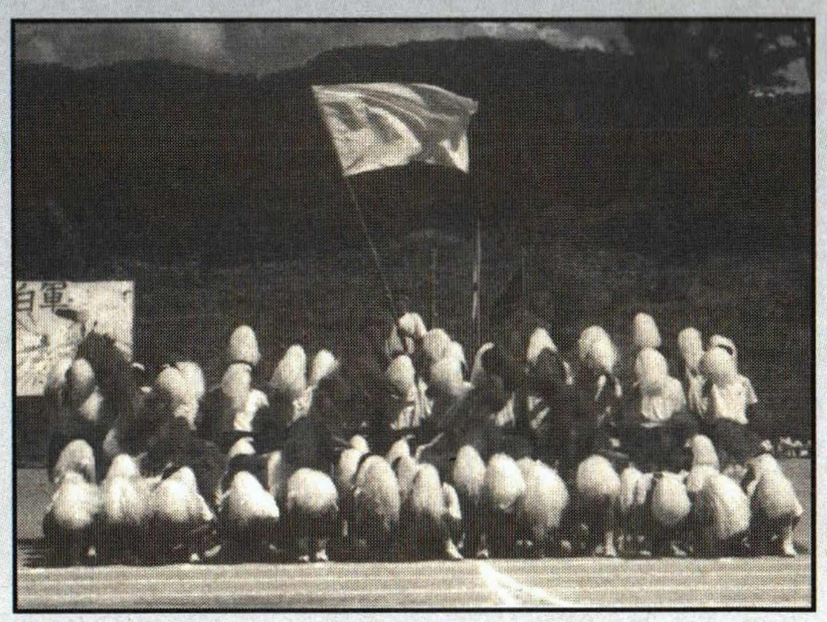
In my opinion, the *undôkai* seems to serve the same purpose as the big Thanksgiving football game and the pep rally beforehand in America—to give the students a common bond through competition and love of the game.

It would be interesting to see if the idea of an *undôkai* in American schools would be well received or not. While getting tired, sweaty, and hoarse on a hot August weekend doesn't sound like a cup of tea, it could do a great deal for school unity, and you may be surprised at how much fun it is.

Besides, it beats watching sumo all day....☆

Geoffrey Tebbetts currently works for the JET program as an assistant English teacher in Matsuyama, Japan

Photos by Geoffrey Tebbetts



anime focus

History of Mecha Anime

PART 3 THE DIFFUSION

The saga of Japan's mecha legacy continues. By **Benjamin Wright**

Megazone 23

© Idol/Artmic

WHAT IS "MECHA"?

The term "mecha" is a contraction of the English word "mechanism," and in Japanese it's actually used to describe any mechanical device. However, anime's distinct breed of large, anthropomorphic machines demand a better English moniker than "giant robot"—many of these devices aren't robots at all, since they require a human pilot to operate them! These man-machines are actually closer to vehicles than robots, with the term "exoskeleton" describing them most accurately. But "exoskeleton" is far too clumsy a word and connotes none of the agility and raw power that these metal giants are so famous for. Nor does it convey any sense of the foreign—a feeling which is inescapable when watching Japan's robotic warriors in action. Finally, some of these towering machines really ARE robots, if not cybernetic life forms in and of themselves. "Mecha" has therefore come to be the accepted term for anime's favorite props (with "mech" sometimes used for the singular). ☆

Up until 1984, mecha anime was a fairly straightforward affair: Japan's giant robots stuck primarily to television and occasionally ventured onto the big screen. Naturally, there were plenty more mecha to be had in the fields of manga and children's toys, but by and large the home of the giant robot was the weekly animated television series. All this changed in 1985, however, when two new mediums drastically broadened the territory of the giant robot. Change happened faster, innovations became greater, and distinctions got blurrier thanks to video games and original animation videos (OAVs).

With the proliferation of VCRs, the new straight-to-video market grew rapidly. Made exclusively for video release, OAVs were short and self-contained, offering anime creators the opportunity to experiment like never before. One of the first OAVs to feature a giant robot was ***The Fantastic Adventure of Yohko: Leda***. Much like the TV series ***Aura Battler Dunbine***, ***Leda*** was a fantasy story which also featured a uniquely baroque mech; this kind of design work had so far been rare, but OAVs were going to change all that.

Another early OAV that changed the face of anime mecha was 1985's ***Fight! Iczer-1***. This was a superhero story in the same vein as some of the current children's *tokusatsu* shows—not the super *sentai* franchise, but series such as ***Kamen Rider*** and the "Space Sheriff" institution, which had themselves started throwing in giant robots for their toy value. ***Iczer-1*** took this model and ran it through an anime filter, resulting in a mature, intense story which (among other things) featured a super robot called Iczer Robo. Being organically based and symbiotic with its pilot, Iczer Robo represented another new approach to mecha concepts. ***Iczer-1*** was also the first major project to be graced with the talents of Masami Obari (***Fatal Fury, Toshinden, Gowcaizer***), a man who would become a big name in mecha anime.

The most important of the first crop of mecha OAVs, however, was ***Megazone 23***. Its staff included many of the same people who'd worked on ***Macross***, and its story recycled some of the show's ideas in clever new ways. The result was a movie-length sci-fi saga of tremendous quality, and it featured a handful of transformable motorcycle mecha designed by none other than studio Artmic—the same crew who'd been cast off the original ***Macross*** project. Hugely popular, ***Megazone 23*** spawned a sequel in 1986 whose mecha stand as the height of complexity in Real Robot design even today.

While the OAV forum was pumping out endless new varieties of mecha concepts, ***Gundam***-type shows dominated the airwaves, and video games were just starting to become sophisticated enough to field mecha designs that were competitive with those of anime. The first robot-oriented video games were side-scrolling shooters for the Famicon like ***Volguard II, Formation Z, Deeva***, and ***Raios***. Although such games (and thus their mecha designs) remained fairly primitive up until 1990, they had opened the door to a new field of giant robot design—a field which today is giving the anime industry some serious competition.

Back on the TV screen, ***Z*** (Zeta) ***Gundam***'s dominance continued. The only competitor in the Real Robot arena was ***SPT Layzner***, a fine show directed by ***Votoms*** creator Ryosuke Takahashi but whose mecha designs were obviously influenced by those of ***Zeta Gundam***. Super Robots, however, began to experience a comeback thanks to the new possibilities that the OAV market was demonstrating. So it was that 1985 saw the premiere of the mecha-ninja TV series ***Tobikage***, the ***Transformers*** (whose living robots would prove to be a surprisingly long-lived institution), and the first show to apply modern Real Robot sensibilities to the "old school" Super Robot formula: ***Dancougar***.

The years 1986 and '87 saw the same trends continue. ***Zeta Gundam*** was immediately followed by ***Gundam ZZ*** (Double Zeta), a series overpopulated with mecha, oddly humorous and poorly thought-out in comparison to its predecessor. Another ***Gundam*** knockoff series, ***Metal Armor Dragonar***, survived mostly on its promotional artwork (which was done by Masami Obari). ***The Transformers*** marched onward with ***Transformers 2010*** and ***The Headmasters***, and even inspired a competing toy line (***Machine Robo***, known in the U.S. as ***Gobots***), to launch their own series: ***Revenge of Chronos*** and ***Battle Hackers***.

The OAV market exploded in 1986 and '87, with two names rising to the top of the heap: Masami Obari and Kenichi Sonoda. The technically adept Sonoda and studio Artmic experienced tremendous success with series like ***Gall Force*** in 1986 and ***Bubblegum Crisis*** in 1987. Obari, whose distinctly stylized and "muscular"-looking mecha artwork had influenced ***Machine Robo***, also worked on the later episodes of ***Bubblegum Crisis*** and then went on to produce ***Dangaioh***. All this occurred amid a flurry of smaller OAVs such as ***Dead Heat, Legaciam, Le Deus, Demon of Steel***, and ***Dragon's Heaven***.

By the time 1988 rolled around, televised mecha anime had crashed. Maximum saturation had been reached thanks to ***Gundam***, all its imitators, and the past year's profusion of Super Robots. The only mecha to be seen on TV from '88 to '89 were ***The Transformers*** (in the form of ***Chôjin Masterforce*** and ***Victory***), the various rubber suits of the Super Sentai series, and the superdeformed mecha of fantasy shows like ***Majin Eiyûden Wataru*** and ***Granzort***. Truly, it was a dark time for mecha fans.

During this brief "dark age," the giant robot took shelter in the other, more open-minded OAV markets. Real Robots managed to survive through the one-two combination of movies and OAVs; 1988's much-anticipated ***Gundam*** movie ***Char's Counterattack*** was purported to be the last story in the franchise but was followed the next year by the OAV series ***War in the Pocket***, and 1988's ***Patlabor*** OAV series was followed up by a movie in 1989. Also on video during this time was the third and final ***Megazone 23*** story and such Super Robot series as ***Hades Project Zeorymer, Ariel***, and ***Aim For the Top! Gunbuster***. This last series was produced by newcomers who called themselves Gainax. Few suspected that this upstart anime studio would completely revolutionize the field of mecha anime in the coming decade. ☆

NEXT TIME!

ANIMERICA's titanic History of Mecha Anime plumbs the mysterious depths of ***Evangelion***. Be here for…

The Retro Craze

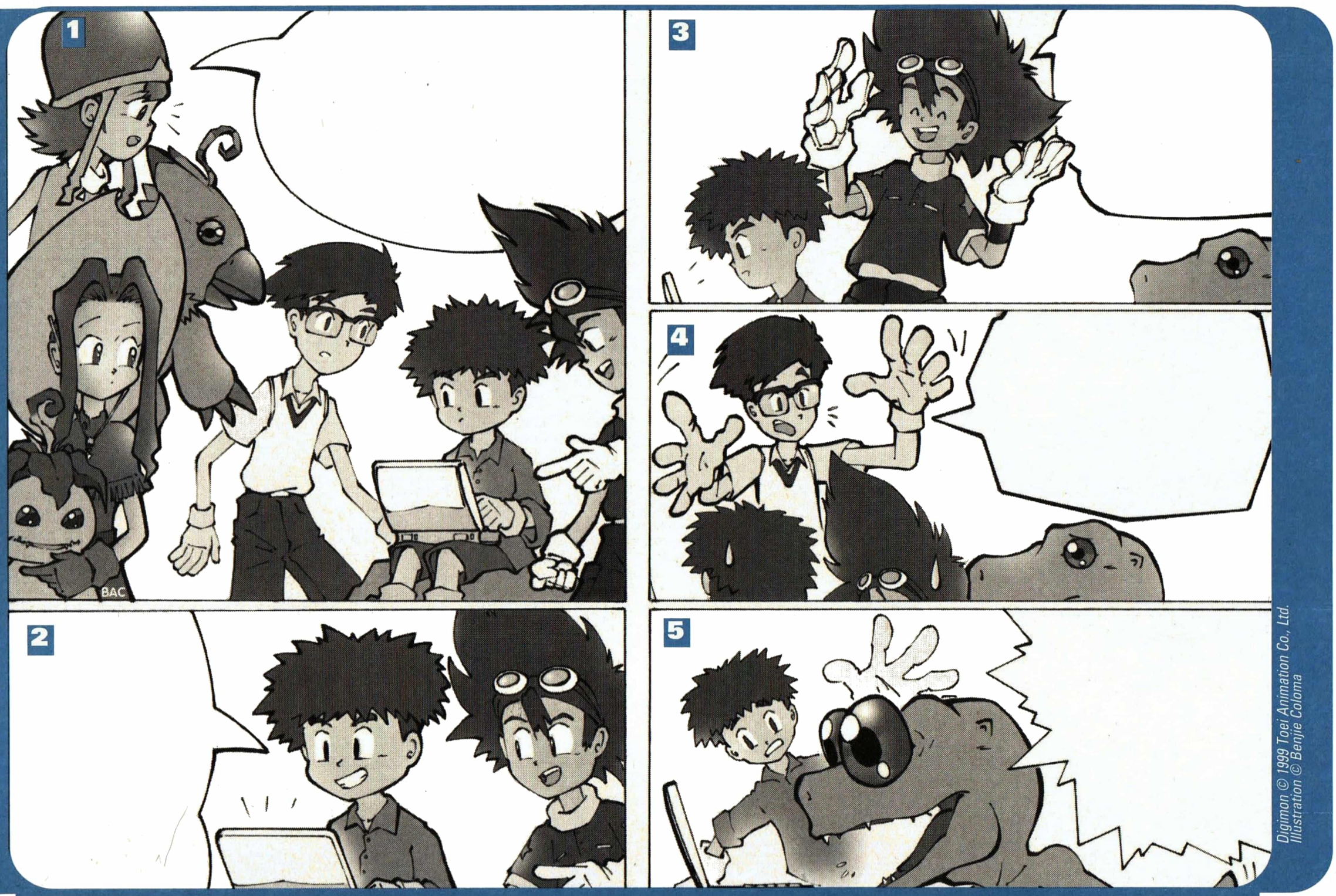
anime focus

Benjie Coloma's
FUN WITH PORKEN BEANS

ANIMERICA CONTEST!

Back in Vol. 8, No. 7, we asked you to tell us what the Digidestined are saying, and now, here are the winners!

PRIZES
All winners pick up the first ***Dragon Ball Z*** graphic novel, courtesy of Viz Comics!



Digimon © 1999 Toei Animation Co., Ltd.
Illustration © Benjie Coloma

Winners were chosen by the *ANIMERICA* staff on the basis of humor, originality, and whether or not the dialogue seemed "in character." (Honestly, some of you people have dirty, dirty minds!) Note that two entries used a different order: see the numbers on the entries and the illustration above to follow the panels.

Tina Ventura, Chestnut Ridge, NY

1) Sora: Izzy, what in the world are you typing for now? Don't you ever tire of it?
3) Tai: I know! Izzy must be decoding something <u>again!</u>
4) Izzy: Or maybe he's trying to track Myostismon, but Myotismon'll find <u>us</u> and we'll all be done for!
2) Joe: Heh…Actually, I'm finishing up a paper for Home Ec on the natural productivity of growing fruits and vegetables with a special fertilizer.
5) Agumon: *FOOD!!*

Ben Maes, Everett, MA

1) Sora: What are you doing?
2) Joe: I am trying to beat Tai's score at ***Tetris***.
3)Tai: Ha! Ha! You still don't beat my high score.
4) Izzy: Please stop playing. I need to use the laptop to do my homework!
5) Agumon: Shut up. It's my turn to play ***Tetris***. Go get a number and get in line.

Jenny Mantini, Charleston, SC

1) Sora: So what's the plan, Izzy? Do you have an idea of how we could defeat the enemy?
2) Joe: I was thinking…maybe I could give one of the digi-monsters a computer virus.
3) Tai: Hey, I know a surefire way to scare the enemy for good. Let them see Joe in nothing but his underwear! Ha, ha, ha, ha!
4) Izzy: Tai! What's that supposed to… Hey, what's Agumon doing?
5) Agumon: You're not going to believe this! I just made five million dollars trading stocks on the Internet!

Nikki Robinson, Pryor, OK

1) Sora: Hey, what are you dimwits doing with that computer you guys have??
2) Joe: We're downloading a computer virus into other people's computer. He, he, he.
3) Tai: Yah! And then everyone will be really mad at us. Ha ha ha ha!
4) Izzy: No, wait! If a Digimon gets exposed to a virus his eyes will pop out!
5) Agumon: RRRRRRRRR
Tai: Stop!!

Ben Jarvis, Los Angeles, CA

1) Sora: Hey Izzy! Didn't you hear? They *closed* Napster! You can't download MP3s anymore!!
(sound effects) tap tap tap
3) Tai: Don't worry, Sora!! Napster won't be officialy closed until the trial begins!!
4) Joe: B-but, Tai!! That's immoral *AND* illegal!! You're taking hard-earned money away from musicians and breaking copyright laws!! *We could get arrested!!*
2) Izzy: It's not really stealing, Joe! I wouldn't have bought these albums, anyway! Besides, as we speak, I'm downloading a Japanese version of "Boogie Shoes" sung by Sailor Venus! There's *tons* of stuff online!
5) Agumon: WOW, guys!! LOOK!! This kid has the theme song from ***Webster!!*** ALRIGHT!!
(music from laptop) *"Stuck in my ways, losing track of the days!"*

Lisa Harshman, Brea, CA

1) Sora: Hey Iggy, whatcha looking at? Another ***Pokémon*** fan site?
2) Joe: Not just any fan site, Sora! This one has a video clip from the Porygon episode!
3) Tai: Cool! I've never seen that one! Go ahead and download it!
4) Izzy: WAIT! Don't you guys know that episode can cause epileptic seizures?! Blink! Before it's too late!
5) Tai: AGUMON!!! Noooooooo!!!

Michael S. Cooler, Beeville, TX

1) Sora: Hey, Izzy! What are you guys lookin' at over there!
2) Joe: I found a web site devoted to the fans of all the male characters of the show!!
3) Tai: Ha, ha, ha! Joe's been voted the geekiest character of the "Digi-dudes"!
4) Izzy: That's impossible!!! I made sure to e-mail all our fans and tell them how much I appreciate their support!
5) Agumon: Wow! I was voted the best-looking male Digimon. That's great!

Roseanna Terry, Sanford, NC

1) Sora: Yo! Cool! A "Waz up" web site!
2) Joe: Oh, yeah! Listen to me! Wazxzzzzz UP!
3) Tai: Waz up! Commercials! Wazz up!
4) Izzy: Please! That sounds so stupid when you say it!
5) Agumon: Wassuppppp!!!

CHYNNA CLUGSTON-MAJOR

Interview by **Kit Fox** and **Rio Yañez**

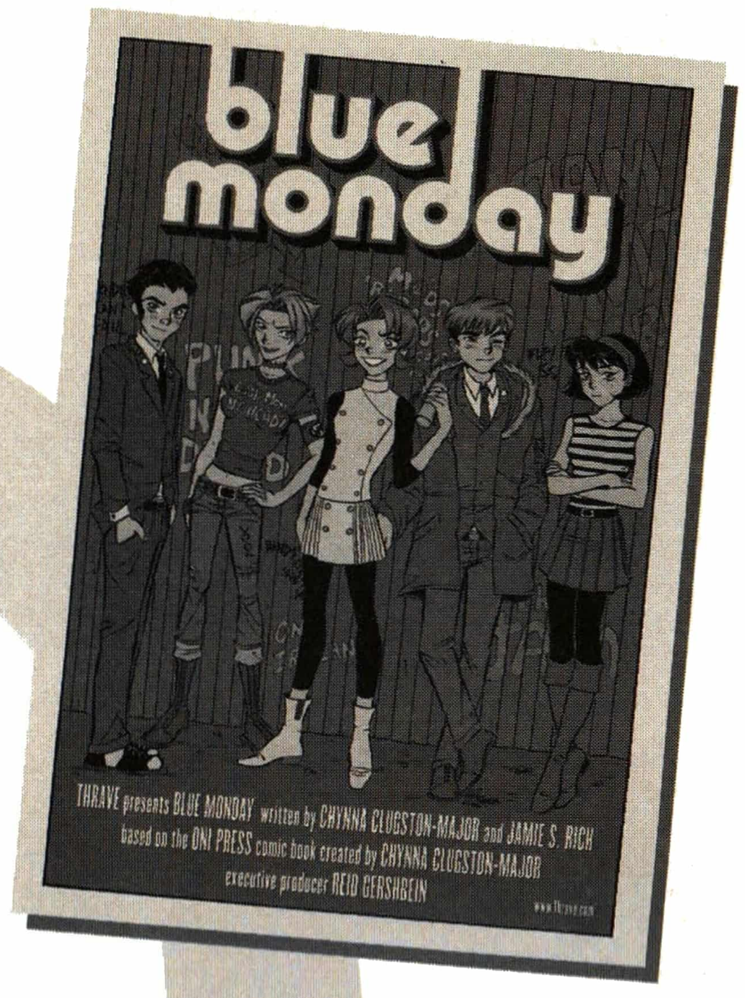
This summer, *ANIMERICA* staff members Kit Fox and Rio Yañez were on a mission. They were traveling to San Diego to meet and interview a special person. After their 7:00 a.m. flight was canceled, they were bumped three times on standby flights, but they held true. After arriving in San Diego three and a half hours late, our intrepid duo made their way to the Hyatt Regency Hotel to check into their room, much to their chagrin, they were told they would have to share a bed despite the fact that they had reservations for a room with two beds. They threw it all at our boys but nothing could stop them. So who is this person that Rio and Kit suffered major flight delays and *shonen ai* predicaments for?

Her name is Chynna Clugston-Major, the dreamy writer and artist of ***Blue Monday***, a three-issue miniseries published by Oni Press. ***Blue Monday*** is set in the early '90s and follows the life of blue-haired teenager Bleu Finnegan. Bleu and her partner in crime Clover Connelly navigate the ups and downs of high school life while trying to score tickets to see English rocker Adam Ant. There are many similarities between Chynna and Bleu. Both have habits of drinking Pepsi and watching Buster Keaton movies, both have a stuffed Oscar the Grouch doll nicknamed "Occy," and both love Adam Ant.

Blue Monday, as well as Chynna's other work, features a manga-inspired art style. Unlike many manga-esque books that have flooded the scene, ***Blue Monday***'s art has a purpose and a consistency that some others lack—manga style or no manga style, it is one of the most original and creative series out there. Never has there (in the opinion of our dear Kit and Rio, that is) been a character with such a humorously foul mouth like Clover, and never has a music scene been so perfectly captured in the pages of a comic book.

Clugston-Major's most recent work has been art for the ***Buffy the Vampire Slayer*** comic as well as illustrations in ***Cut My Hair***, a novel by ***Blue Monday*** editor Jamie S. Rich about the '80s punk scene. Citing Rumiko Takahashi as a primary influence, Chynna's ***Blue Monday*** adventures can also be found in the pages of ***Dark Horse Presents***, ***Action Girl***, and ***Oni Double Feature***.

Kit and Rio's dream came true at last when they sat down for an interview with Chynna at San Diego Comic-Con International 2000 to discuss manga, music, fashion, high school, and the art of Irish swearing. Oi!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based on the ONI PRESS comic book created by CHYNNA CLUGSTON-MAJOR
executive producer REID GERSHBEIN
www.thrave.com

ANIMERICA: One of the reasons why we're here to interview you is that a lot of the times at the magazine we get letters from people saying "My aspirations are to go into the manga or anime business myself, either by traveling to Japan or by doing my own anime- or manga-styled work here in the United States." Do you feel like you're living your dreams and doing what you've wanted to do from the beginning?

Clugston-Major: Yeah, I've always wanted to do this. Ever since I was five I thought I'd draw cartoons or comic books. I actually wanted to be an animator for a while, but then I got rejected by the California State Summer School for the Arts. So I was like "F*** you guys! I'm gonna draw comic books!" So that's what I did.

ANIMERICA: You said that you are a big fan of Rumiko Takahashi's work.

Clugston-Major: Absolutely.

ANIMERICA: Are there any other particular manga or anime titles that you've drawn influence from?

Clugston-Major: There's one that, I can't even read it—it's never been translated, but I think it's called ***Itsu de Yumeo***, or something like that. It's really cool—it's about manga artists and the crap that they go through. It starts with this guy who, from what I can tell, is in high school and he loves this girl and he gets out and breaks into the manga industry and is doing really good. He gets a lot of bull from his editors. It's really great the way it's done; I should show it to you guys.

ANIMERICA: What else are you a fan of—not things that have necessarily influenced you?

Clugston-Major: ***Bubblegum Crisis*** and ***Appleseed***. Anything by Shirow, obviously. ***Gunsmith Cats***. Oh!—***Blade of the Immortal***, that's just amazing; I effin' love that book.

ANIMERICA: What do you find that manga has to offer that is different or lacking from American comics?

Clugston-Major: I find that you can really express yourself far easier in the manga style than you can in just regular American. They try and stay so realistic, I think that's cool but when I have a freakout or a tantrum on a page—I want to be able to do a superdeformed person and not have people freak out about it. You can't really do that with the American style. Actually, you know, I don't know how to analyze it—it's expressions.

ANIMERICA: What do you think are the benefits of either school of style?

Clugston-Major: Whenever I think of American comics in general, not alternatives, just all that mainstream crap—I hate it. I love English comics like ***Exit*** and ***Tank Girl***. I can't think of anything that's better about it.

ANIMERICA: Let's talk about ***Blue Monday***. In our opinion, one of the greatest joys in the comic is Clover and her immense vocabulary of Irish curses. Where did Clover—and I guess that means you—learn to talk shite the Irish way?

Clugston-Major: I had some penpals in Belfast, and my dad is a total anglophile. That's where I got it from. Watching lots of British TV and Irish movies, things like that. Also I collect language books and go through them. I can't speak hardly anything. [LAUGHS] Just gathering all that information and talking to people who are out of control from delerium.

ANIMERICA: Is Clover based on anyone in particular?

Clugston-Major: Yeah, she's kinda like my id. She's a lot like I was in high school. Actually Bleu and Clover are like me split in half. The way she looks is influenced by a couple of friends I've had before, she's a little mesh of people.

ANIMERICA: Do you know if either Adam Ant or Blur has seen your comic?

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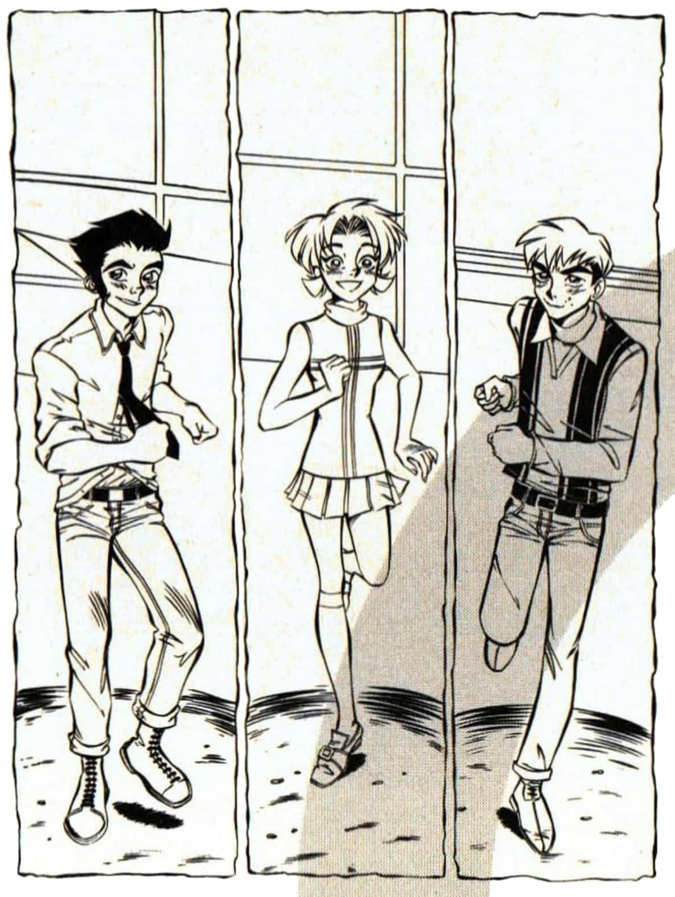
anime focus

CHYNNA CLUGSTON-MAJOR

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)



Clugston-Major: Actually I got a letter from Gosh Comics in England that Marco, the guitarist, came in and picked up the book and showed it to Adam and Adam actually liked it. I got a littled freaked out. I thought that was the coolest. They actually got my e-mail address so if I luck out I may actually get a letter from him. They said he was interested in getting in contact and I'm really excited about that. Hopefully that will happen.

ANIMERICA: What can you tell us about your other work? I know you've done work on ***Buffy the Vampire Slayer*** (#21, #22).

Clugston-Major: It's a great show. Scott wanted me to do some flashbacks for a story and of course I was more than willing. I was really nervous drawing them and they didn't turn out exactly as I wanted them to but I tried. [LAUGHS] But it was fun working on it.

ANIMERICA: And ***Cut My Hair***, the book from ***Blue Monday*** editor Jamie Rich, you did several art pieces for that?

Clugston-Major: Yeah, I love that book, I think it's great. Jamie's just amazingly talented. He gave me assignments that he thought would cater to the lovelorn hero-worshipper type, which is obviously my department. "Thanks Jamie, I'm a big geek." [LAUGHS] It was really fun to work on that project. Of course I almost made the book late but I just about make everything late because I suck. [LAUGHS]

ANIMERICA: What's next? What's coming down the pipe that people should look out for?

Clugston-Major: I'll be doing a four-page ***Jingle Belle*** story with Paul Dini—or *for* Paul Dini, I think he's going to let me write it as well. There's going to be a valentines story for ***Buffy*** that I'll be doing, I'm going to have a lot of fun doing that. I'm writng the next ***Blue Monday*** series right now and I'll be doing an internet cartoon thingy with Thrave (thrave.com), that'll be ***Blue Monday***. Also there might be a possible project with Adam Warren in the future.

ANIMERICA: How did you get introduced to Adam Warren? He did a cover for the first issue of ***Blue Monday***.

Clugston-Major: Um, I was a geeky fan girl and followed him everywhere, "Adam, I love you!" ***Dirty Pair*** was, besides Rumiko Takahashi, what really what got me interested in manga.

ANIMERICA: Really?

Clugston-Major: Yeah, which is funny because it's American manga, but you never know. [LAUGHS] He's just amazing. I first got introduced with ***A Plague of Angels*** and just loved Kei. Kei is my favorite character. If there is a cartoon heaven, then I want to be Kei when I die. She's got a great personality, Ms. Charm.

ANIMERICA: A lot of it also comes from his writing.

Clugston-Major: Yeah, he's just outstanding.

ANIMERICA: Well, having written your own work and drawn someone else's, do you prefer one over the other?

Clugston-Major: I like writing my own just because it's a lot of fun. It's kinda nice when you don't have to think as much when you're drawing someone else's, but then again I get nervous—I start stressing that I don't know if I'm going to be showing what they want me to show so I just turn into a big ball of nerves. But I'm writing my own stuff, I can have something in mind but then I can get lazy and change it and I'll be fine with it because I wrote it (laughs). There's benefits to both.

ANIMERICA: The next ***Blue Monday*** series is called ***Absolute Beginners***. Can you give our readers any hints as to what it might be about?

Clugston-Major: Um.... Well, there's gonna be a—No, I can't say that.

ANIMERICA: We don't want to put you on the spot.

Clugston-Major: No it's that I was going to use a song lyric and I'm such a cheeseball like that. I can't even think of my own names—I have to use a song lyric. But there's going to be some love-triangle things and stuff like that. It's going to get into the more love aspect and we're going to see how that turns out.

ANIMERICA: As for the actual title ***Blue Monday***...I know there was a "Blue Monday" done by Orgy....

Clugston-Major: Ugh!

ANIMERICA: ...and one done by New Order.

Clugston-Major: New Order, thank you. Actually I created Bleu when I was 16 and I had been trying to find a name around then and I was always listening to that stuff. Blue Monday just sounded like the best idea so I just kept it.

ANIMERICA: Music seems to be a very big part of your work.

Clugston-Major: Absolutely. I can't function without music, so I have to be blaring Jam, or The Cramps, Depeche Mode, or obviously New Order.

ANIMERICA: What do you like listening to right now? What CDs do you carry on you?

Clugston-Major: Actually I've been making a lot of mix CDs and I've put a lot of The Who and The Zombies and a lot sixties stuff. Also I've been getting back into Peter Murphy and bunch of crap from the early '90s like the Charlatans.

ANIMERICA: Are you into riding scooters and Vespa culture?

Clugston-Major: I love scooters, I think they're great. But mostly I love being a passenger on one actually so I can cruise around and enjoy everything. I always get nervous and I don't want to kill anybody or myself. That would suck. [LAUGHS] I hate the idea of crashing.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 68)

ANIMERICA INTERVIEW

ANIMERICA CONTEST

Oi! Win an original piece of Chynna Clugston-Major artwork!

Answer ye these questions three and pick up this kickin' ***Blue Monday*** signboard! Crikey!

1. Who played Jimmy in ***Quadrophenia***?
2. How old was Paul Weller when he broke up The Jam?
3. Name at least three members of the infamous "Brat Pack."

RULES

Write your answers on a postcard and mail it to:

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anime focus

CHYNNA CLUGSTON-MAJOR

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 66)

ANIMERICA: For those of our readers who may not be in the know, what exactly is a Mod?

Clugston-Major: A Mod? Aw, man, I don't know how to define that. [LAUGHS] Well, okay, we could go by it this way, a Modernist is someone who's really up and hip on fashion and music and just attitude. I guess more-fashionable-than-thou. They're kinda snotty, though, most of the ones I've ever met. I don't really hang out with Mods that much.

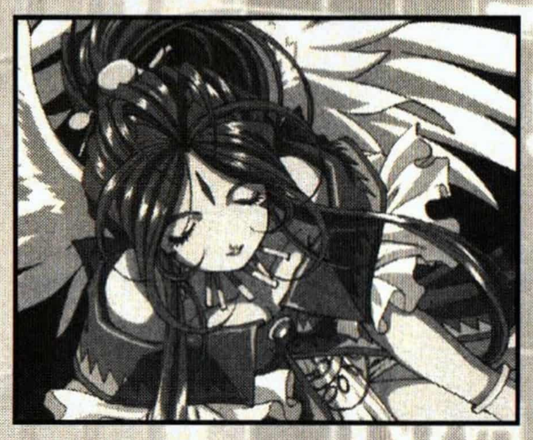
ANIMERICA: Do you have any words of advice for the aspiring artists out there? Some of the ***Lum*** fans who love Blur?

Clugston-Major: Nothing comes to mind. Maybe that they can do themselves a favor and not freak out like fangirls and boys, 'cause they'll regret it later, I know I do. Every time I see someone who I went up to and went, "Oh my God!" I go, "Oh f***." I know they remember me being this total idiot. If you ever have to hang out at a party in the future, if you think you might, just try not to dork out. [LAUGHS] ☆

KIT FOX WRITES FROM JAPAN

TOKYO KITSUNE

I was talking with Trish Ledoux a couple of days before I left for Japan, and she made the comment that she never truly realized how biased Olympic coverage was until she saw it in another country. She couldn't have been more correct. Throughout the span of the Sydney Olympics, I can truthfully say that I never saw a single American win a gold medal, but I heard that the U.S. actually came away with one or two. So what were they covering? One word: judo. Being the fanboy of martial-arts movies that I am, my tastes tend to run toward the more flashy, jaw-dropping acts of midair physical prowess that can be found in a Jet Li or Donnie Yen flick (sorry, all you ***Best of the Best*** lovers out there). But after watching the Japanese Olympic team in action, I can honestly say that I have a newfound appreciation for the sport. Not only does it require immense skill, finesse and power, but when performed by someone at the top of their game, it looks really cool. Getting back to the U.S. Olympic blackout, though, I remember I'd be watching a match between, oh, Kazakhstan and Uruguay and directly off-screen in a muffled voice I'd hear an announcer say, "And now competing for the United States of America, Jesus Christ." But the camera wouldn't pan an inch. I'd like to think that things were different back in the U.S., but I'm sure they weren't.



Sure, Belldandy's gorgeous. But how many cigs could I buy for 18 bucks?

***

As fate would have it, I have been spending a good amount of time (and hundred-yen coins) in game centers. Although the classic video arcade may have gone the way of the dinosaurs in America (with the exception of amusement parks and tourist spots, of course), in Japan, finding one is as easy as falling off a log. Of course they're chock-full of fighting and shooting games galore, but what about the consoles that aren't stateside? Well, allow me to commence: it goes without saying that the unanimously elected "Manliest Manime of All Time," ***Fist of the North Star***, should be the inspiration for one of the manliest arcade games too. Each ***Fist*** machine comes with six punching pads (three on each side) that swing out and must be struck with a fist (or fish, I imagine) when lit up. If you hit the pads before they're lit up, it's not only no good, but incredibly frustrating. Your opponents range from Jagi, to King Rau, to that really big fat guy, and you keep swinging until you get their life meter to the end. Thereupon you are allowed to perform one of Ken's patented "make yo' fool head explode" maneuvers, such as punching in a circle as many times as possible in 20 seconds. Tiring? Extremely. Manly? Oh, you betcha.

Coming in at a close second on the Manometer is the ***Golgo 13*** super-sniper game. If you liked ***Silent Scope***, you'll love this one. As Duke Togo, it's your responsibility to take only the most difficult of sniper missions, ranging from assassinating gangsters on their balcony from a moving helicopter to shooting through a hangman's noose à la ***The Good, The Bad, And The Ugly*** to shooting off the right high heel of a lady walking up a flight of stairs. Naturally these levels require incredible precision, and you can only flub two of the assignments before the game is over. *ANIMERICA*'s Patrick Macias was in town a couple of weeks ago, and he also had a great amount of difficulty prying himself away from this addictive, one hundred yen blood rush. "Although it's terribly stressful, it's so fulfilling on the other hand," he said. After each completed mission, you are treated to a skeletal diagram of your hit just so you can see how close your bullet came to their medulla oblongata. Would you believe it? The second version came out just the other day. Suffice it to say, pulling Duke's trigger has never been so much fun.

***

Those of you who complain about dropping US$8.75 to see an Adam Sandler flick at 9 o'clock on a Friday night have no idea how good you really have it. First and foremost, the last show at nearly every theater in Tokyo (with the exception of midnight performances) is 7:00 p.m. Secondly, the average movie ticket costs the equivalent of $18 (or $15 if you have a student ID). Being the frequent patron of the cinema that I am, and faced with the fact that I find myself in a country where the words "bargain matinee" do not apply, my movie-watching days have nearly dwindled to nothing, but I also make sure to have a good time when I go. Did you know that you can get a full cup of beer in a Japanese theater? No kidding, and the concessions are almost reasonably priced. You can also purchase a wide variety of bobbles and bangles with your Goobers and shrimp flakes, such as commemorative ***Bedazzled*** key chains and aluminum can caddies. Although I wouldn't say that I enjoyed it any more, watching ***Gone in 60 Seconds*** with a cold brewski almost made the experience worthwhile. Somehow the act of sitting through yet another asinine Hollywood action farce filled me with an incredible sense of nostalgia and homesickness...but then I went and got another beer.

***

The ***Ah! Megami-sama*** film has just come out in theaters, and yet I find myself not caring.

NEXT MONTH: The magnificently magnanimous manga mavens of Mandarake!

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Oh My Goddess! © Kosuke Fujishima/Kodansha

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Courtesy Breasts Cover the younguns' eyes; there's young misses prancing around without their tops on or other nudie displays.

ESP Extrasensory powers, such as telepathy, firestarting, telekinesis …also includes sorcery.

Ultraviolence Gratuitous weaponry and explosions don't qualify by themselves; be on the lookout for severed body parts and/or buckets of gore.

Masterpiece Theater Consider this an anime classic; may contain socially redeeming themes.

Kung-Fu Fighting Martial arts of all shapes and sizes, silly and serious.

Romantic Hijinks Boy meets girl; boy loses girl and comes back with her sisters; the neighbors interfere, etc.

Mondo Mecha From spaceships to cyborgs to giant wooden robots, the kind of mechanical devices you'll find only in anime.

Super Science Traditional sci-fi gadgets, themes, and plot devices, both silly and serious. May include mad scientists.

Not of This World Close encounters of a less-than-friendly kind with invaders from other worlds or dimensions. They never come in peace and often leave in pieces.

Evil Overlord Megalomania, anime style. World domination is the theme when you see this one.

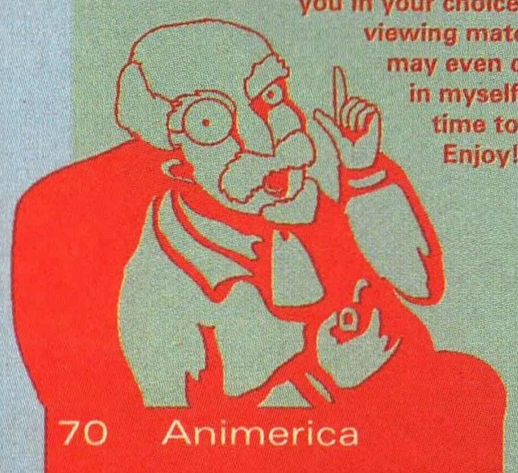
Idol Singers Expect to hear singing from girls (sometimes boys) in outrageous costumes.

Bad Words !#@&! Beware: salty language ahead. Use caution with younger viewers.

Naughty Tentacles 'Nuff said.

The major sez…

Welcome, my friends, to the wonderful world of Japanese animation! This is my domain, Best of the West, where my reliable crew of reviewers attempts to guide you in your choices of viewing material. I may even chime in myself from time to time. Enjoy!



BACK IN BLACK

BLACK HEAVEN

VOL. 1 ROCK BOTTOM

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Back in the high school days of my youth, I was in a garage band. We covered songs from groups like Led Zeppelin, AC/DC, and Dramarama, and performed them all of two times to the public during our three-year existence. Flash-forward three years, and here I am sitting in the *ANIMERICA* office typing this review without having touched an instrument since. Such is the life of Oji, an '80s heavy-metal icon turned straightlaced salaryman. Oji's job and mundane family life are suffocating him when he learns that he is being scouted by an alien race that hopes to use his heavy-metal sound to save the universe. For people who are good at video games, there was ***The Last Starfighter***, and for those who rocked in their youth, there's now ***Black Heaven***.

Black Heaven presents to us the life of Oji, better known as "Gabe," the former lead guitarist of Black Heaven. Unfortunately Oji has become a family man with a wife who is intent on getting rid of any reminders of his former life including the Flying V guitar he treasures so much. His professional life isn't any better—he toils in a thankless office job while being verbally abused by his boss. Oji's world changes when he meets Leyla Yuki, the newest employee at the office.

Leyla is secretly an alien military officer sent to monitor and research Oji. The aliens believe that the sound of Oji playing his guitar is their only hope of victory in a war with invaders. In order to get close to Oji and observe him playing the guitar, Leyla puts the moves on him.

Much of the first four episodes of ***Black Heaven*** revolves around the relationship of Leyla and Oji. He believes that she's in love with him, while her goal is to get him to play guitar for her. This leads to scenes where Leyla steals him away to play guitar solos for her which throw her into ecstasy and make her moan, making for some scenes almost fit for the ***Red Shoe Diaries***. The unleashing of his pent-up energy by returning to his heavy-metal guitar roots slowly begins to transform him and return him to the man he once was. All the while Leyla's assistants keep Oji's wife and son, both of whom suspect that he is up to something, at bay.

Director Yasuhito Kikuchi makes interesting choices in the timing of the series. In the hands of most directors, Oji would have been up in space and saving the universe by the end of the first episode. Instead, the episodes presented on ***Rock Bottom*** are only the very beginning of a larger picture. In later episodes, Oji does lay a heavy-metal smackdown on alien invaders, but the story takes its time in getting there. That's a good thing—Kikuchi is able to milk the show for comedy and good music even before the main plot of the series gets into full swing.

For a show about a metal player, ***Black Heaven*** is incredibly cute—unexpectedly so, based on the show's head-banging psychadelic intro and a bit of a disappointment in that regard—but it works. While it sometimes slips into sitcom-like hijinks, the blending of science fiction and romantic comedy is successful. It's also a nice change of pace to see a show like this starring adults and not another exploitation of teenagers. If you're nostalgic for the '80s heavy-metal scene, are an office worker without a local fight club to let loose in, or are in need of an escapist fantasy, ***Black Heaven*** is your ticket.

Rio Yañez

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ON THE CASE & IN YOUR FACE

ADV Films • English VHS • 120 mins. • US$14.98 • VHSBW/005D (English VHS) • Featuring a cast of scrawny characters that would benefit from a bucket of fried chicken.

Now I'm sure I don't need to tell you that anime videotapes aren't the most affordable medium to watch. When ***Burn-Up W*** was initially released, it was done on four one-episode tapes that were subtitled only and had a price tag of $29.95. As much as I like the thrill of blind anime buying, shelling out that much money for a 30-minute tape is a sucker's bet. Thankfully, ADV has released all four episodes of ***Burn-Up W*** onto one English-dubbed tape. My only regret now is that I waited so long to get into the series.

© 1996 AIC/MRC by courtesy of A.D. Vision

Burn-Up W follows the exploits of Team Warrior, a highly skilled yet underbudgeted crime-fighting police force. The main character of the series is Rio, a shopaholic who is always dodging creditors while on the job. The rest of the team is rounded out by a standard set of stock characters, including the poor loser who has a crush on Rio. Almost every character has an obsession to deal with: shopping, panties, baseball, guns, or virtual idols. The first episode of the series introduces us to Team Warrior as they take on a hostage situation in which the ransom demands include a name change to an upcoming video game and that an idol singer perform a naked bungee jump. The second episode, about a kidnapped virtual idol, has a hilarious ***Evangelion*** parody in which a psychotic robot named El Hegante (a reference to wrestler El Gigante in Spanish) goes on a rampage. The final two episodes have to do with a terrorist takeover of the police station Team Warrior operates out of. Throughout every episode is a running storyline about a virtual drug that ties into many of the mishaps that occur.

At its heart, ***Burn-Up W*** is a screwball comedy. Over-the-top action takes a backseat to the zany quirks and schemes of each character. That's not to say there's a lack of action, both serious and funny, but what drives each episode is comedy and satire. The subtle and not-so-subtle parodies of *otaku* obsessions are a pleasing wink at the audience.

As for the dub of the series, ***Burn-Up W*** falls into the category of the new wave of ADV dubs that can only be called "dub-a-licious." Like many recent ADV dubs, it is filled with plenty of slang, raunch, and pop-culture jokes. References to "Taking a bite out of crime" and ***The Jerry Springer Show*** will probably throw translation purists into grand mal seizures, but most everyone else will appreciate the humor. The cast does a good job of hitting the punch lines—Amanda Winn as Rio does especially well, even if a character named Chisato ends up being called something closer to "Gelato" a lot.

On a personal note, it's not often that a person finds an anime series with a character that has the same name as they do. I have to admit, I got a thrill out of seeing my namesake plant her foot on the backside of crime. Regardless, ***Burn-Up W*** is a good time at a great value. The ludicrous dub makes the action and preexisting comedy all that much funnier. A good anime and a good deal—that's something I don't mind having my name on.

Rio Yañez

WILL THE REAL GEKIGANGER PLEASE STEP FORWARD

MARTIAN SUCCESSOR NADESICO

VOL. 7: CONTACT!

ADV Films • English VHS/Subtitled VHS • 60 mins. • US$19.98/$29.95 • VHSND/007D (English VHS) • Mecha designs by Mika Akitaka (***Galaxy Fraulein Yuna***)

© XEBEC/Project NADESICO • TV Tokyo

In our last episode of ***Gekiganger***...er...I mean ***Nadesico***, Nergal's Erina Won had continued her experiments on live-subject Boson jumping, this time fixing her sights on Aestivalis pilot and the *Nadesico* cook, Akito Tenkawa—the only human to ever survive the process. Little does Erina know that her activities have tipped off the Jovian forces as to the nature of Nergal's experiments and future tactics, which prompts an attack on Nergal HQ in Yokosuka. The *Nadesico*'s Aestivalis force moves to defend, only to tragically lose their newest pilot in the fray. Things look grim until Akito makes a desperate attempt, sans Aestivalis, to drive the attacker back, but disappears with the Jovian mecha in a Boson jump field. Where did Akito end up, if he's even alive at all?

Almost from the beginning of the first episode, it's apparent that ***Contact!*** signals a shift in direction for ***Nadesico***'s storyline from that of frequent mirth to a much more serious and intense space opera. When Akito is discovered in good health on the moon, Yurika decides to make an unscheduled recovery attempt. But what has been normal time for the crew of the *Nadesico* turns out to be two weeks for Akito, leaving him guilty over the tragic fate of his fellow Aestivalis pilot and the realization that he could have prevented bloodshed had he been aware of the time shift and warned Nergal accordingly.

Then, to compound troubles, there is substantial evidence that a Jovian spy lurks somewhere aboard the *Nadesico* when ***Gekiganger*** merchandise (that show is popular EVERYWHERE!) is discovered in the cockpit of a salvaged Jovian robot. Never fear, though! The maintenance squad has taken it upon themselves to flush out this sinister agent with nothing less than a warehouse of ***Gekiganger*** toys and stickers! Luckily, a sympathetic Megumi discovers the spy while watching an episode of ***Gekiganger***, and it turns out he's no lizard, but human! What secrets concerning the Jovians will he divulge? I don't want to say, but you know it's going to be major!

My only gripe for the whole package is about the English-language dubbing for certain characters' voices, most notably Akito, whose charm with the ladies of the *Nadesico* may not rub off on the viewer whenever he opens up his pie-hole. (I thought that voice was only used for the pimply kid on ***The Simpsons***.) Needless to say, his voice is not congruent with the tone of his Japanese voice-actor counterpart, nor are a few others in the cast.

For all the first-time ***Nadesico*** watchers out there, let it be known that the episodes on ***Contact!*** are filled with all the perfect proportions of gut-splitting humor, mecha action, and lighthearted drama that have already made this series so darn entertaining. Add to that great animation and we're looking at what may very well be a classic in the making. All my misgivings about the dubbing aside, ***Contact!*** continues a solidly entertaining line of volumes in the ***Nadesico*** saga that a fan of any genre can hopefully appreciate and enjoy.

Matt Lopez

A MASTERFUL MOSAIC

COWBOY BEBOP

DVD VOLS. 1-6

Bandai • Bilingual DVD • 100-125 mins. each • US$29.98 each • Vol. 1: 1290; Vol. 2: 1291; Vol. 3: 1292; Vol. 4: 1293; Vol. 5: 1294; Vol. 6: 1295 • Character designs by Toshihiro Kawamoto (***Gundam 0083***)

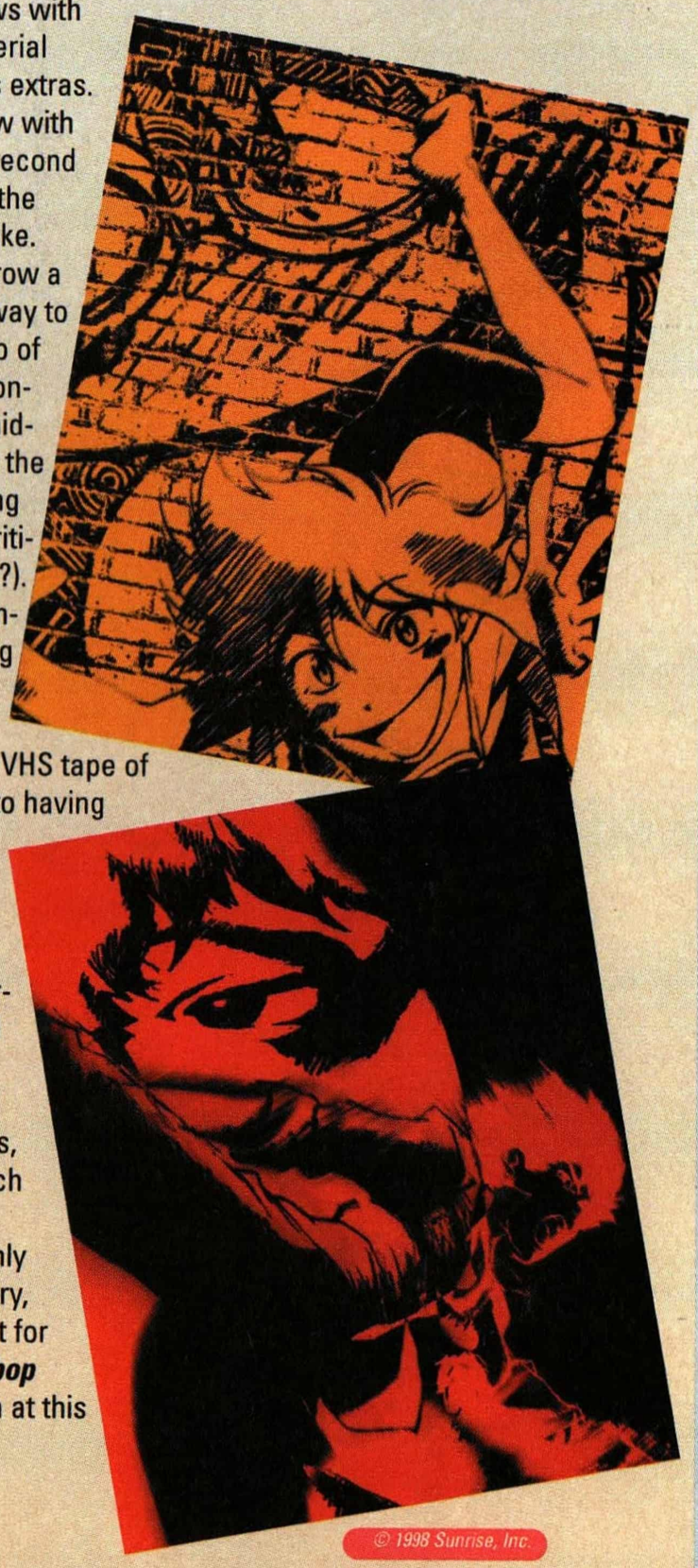
Looking back, it is clear to me that the definitive anime series for DVD collectors in Y2K was ***Cowboy Bebop***. The 26-episode series tells the story of Spike Spiegel, a former mob enforcer who, for undisclosed reasons, faked his death, escaped the mob, and now ekes out a living with an ex-cop named Jet Black. The pair operate as "cowboys" (future slang for "bounty hunters") out of Jet's spaceship, the *Bebop*, in a futuristic society where much of the solar system has been colonized.

Several things about this series grab you at once: first is the animation, which is stunning—top-notch work by the good folks at Sunrise, who seem only to top themselves with big-budget TV shows every year. The music, by Yoko Kanno (***Macross Plus***), is also outstanding, although those expecting a repeat of her orchestral work on ***Macross Plus, Escaflowne***, and ***Brain Powered*** may at first be let down by the jazz score she produced for this series. Movie fans will also spot lots of film references here and there, such as the Bruce Lee/Kareem Abdul Jabbar throwaways in the second episode, a sneaky crook from episode seven who looks like an animated Woody Allen, and the justly famous fifth episode, which plays out like a love letter to John Woo, complete with gangsters, guns, birds, and a spectacular shootout inside a church.

However, a lot of people were not satisfied with the stories early on, and it's easy to see why. Most of them are episodic in nature, with no overarching plot or goal. The humor is not broad, but instead depends on situation and character. We learn little about Spike and Jet, and even less about the supporting cast that joins up along the way: an intelligent Welsh Corgi named Ein, an amnesiac woman with huge debts named Faye Valentine, and a weird girl named Ed who can hack any computer system known to man. On and on they go, from one bounty to another. It's comfortable and entertaining, although aside from the occasional "serious" episode, not all that compelling.

It takes some time and patience to begin to see the mosaic that director Shinichiro Watanabe is assembling here. The future society in which the series is set has been thought through thoroughly and in detail, and it's only through the course of watching several episodes that you begin to get a sense of its scope, its consistency, and its history. And I didn't realize until the series was over that in even more subtle ways, Watanabe is doing the same thing with his characters. They show who they are in little flashes here and there, but they don't tell. Different episodes show them from different angles. Some episodes are laugh-out-loud funny, a few are sad or a bit touching, and still others are grim and sometimes shockingly violent. The result of accumulating all these little moments in all these different contexts is that by the end of the series, the viewer will be comfortable with these characters, maybe not even realizing it. And that's when the bombs Watanabe has so cleverly planted begin going off, leading to a two-part finale that gives meaning and context to what has come before, and will probably inspire its share of controversy in future years.

FEATURES: The DVDs deliver high quality in the video and sound departments. The original Japanese soundtrack is provided with optional English subtitles, as is an English-dubbed version that is well above average in terms of its acting and sound design. In Japan, a preview disc was made for ***Cowboy Bebop***, including a music video and lots of interviews with key staff, and pieces of this material appear on the domestic discs as extras. Of particular note is the interview with Watanabe and key staff on the second disc—it even lets you see what the inside of Sunrise's studio looks like. After the third disc, the extras grow a little slimmer, interviews giving way to things like a remixed music video of the opening theme, "Tank!," a non-credit closing sequence, and a hidden gallery devoted solely to Ein the data dog (although if we're calling them "extras," it's kind of hypocritical to *expect* lots of them, isn't it?).



One other thing worth mentioning is the very competitive pricing of these discs. Each DVD retails for around US$30, which is the same price as that of a subtitled VHS tape of the series. However, in addition to having both language tracks and the extras, the DVDs contain 4 to 5 episodes per disk, whereas the VHS release has only two episodes per tape. At 6 DVDs versus 13 tapes, the combined retail price of all the subtitled tapes is such that for the same price you could not only buy all of the DVDs, but also a low-end player to watch them with.

Overall, ***Cowboy Bebop*** is highly recommended for the art, the story, and the value. I for one can't wait for Sunrise to finish the ***Cowboy Bebop*** movie, which is still in production at this time.

Daniel Huddleston

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A DIGITAL DELICACY

ESCAFLOWNE

VOL. 1: DRAGONS AND DESTINY DVD

Bandai • Bilingual DVD • 100 mins. • US$29.99 • 0430 •
Better than a Dino Jam, whatever that is

For those of you who have yet to experience this grand show, the plot follows high school girl Hitomi Kanzaki who is transported to the world of Gaea where she becomes the key to the future of the many kingdoms there. In her many adventures on Gaea, Hitomi is joined by Van Fanel, a displaced king, and his transforming mecha, the Escaflowne. None of the 26 episodes of the series follows any stock formulas or traditional anime ideas. Although the familiar elements of romance, adventure, and sentimentality are all there, they are presented in an original and fresh form.

Bandai's first release of ***Escaflowne*** on DVD contains the first four episodes of the series, in unedited form, with all of Yoko Kanno's music intact, and with English and Japanese language tracks. This means that the show's English dub can be listened to while experiencing the show as it ought to be. Although the Japanese track has a superior sound mix, ***Escaflowne*** has never looked or sounded better—in any language. A minor fault of the DVD in my mind is in the packaging—the front case depicts a scene that reveals a major plot point that is supposed to be a mystery in the first four episodes. To me, this is tantamount to releasing ***The Crying Game*** with "it's a guy" printed on the box, but for most, this will be merely a cosmetic complaint, if that.

FEATURES: The image and sound quality of the DVD are fantastic. Save for the subtitles, which can be hard to read on occasion, it's perfect. The extras on the disc include trailers for other Bandai releases as well as three ***Escaflowne*** music videos. I was a little disappointed that the music videos were just scenes from the show edited together and set to some of its songs and that we don't get a glimpse of the singer—also the Japanese voice of Hitomi—Maaya Sakamoto. Regardless, the music is good and this DVD is a lot more affordable than an import soundtrack. All that's missing are the "extra scenes" that could be found on the Japanese laser-disc version of the series.

This DVD is the third incarnation of ***Escaflowne***, following Bandai's original subtitled-only VHS release, the horrifically edited "Best Collection," and this, the best of all worlds. As of this writing, Fox has replaced ***Escaflowne*** with ***Nascar Racers*** (if there were more *otaku* living in my neighborhood, I would have rioted in the streets) and there has been no official word if it will ever return to the airwaves. (No offense to ***Nascar Racers***, but what the hell were they thinkin'? Is there something in the water at Fox?) At this point the ***Escaflowne*** tapes and DVDs are the only way to view the episodes dubbed in English. (Personally, I got a little choked up just to see the Sunrise logo air on Fox—it was nice while it lasted.)

Watch this show, in whatever form you can, now.
Rio Yañez

WHEN GOKU HAD A TAIL

DRAGON BALL

THE SAGA OF GOKU

FUNimation/Goldhil Home Media International • 7-tape boxed set • English VHS • Approx. 45 mins. each volume • US$59.99 • The first ***Dragon Ball*** movie plus the first 13 episodes of the original 1986 series

The original ***Dragon Ball*** series was more of a comic fantasy than ***Dragon Ball Z*** and loaded with scatological humor and sexual innuendoes not allowed in American cartoon shows. It was whimsical, rather than action-packed, and offered colorful, imaginative design and a hallucinatory sense of place. Its oddball characters traveled through an acid-dream landscape of strange little towns, roaming dinosaurs, supernatural creatures and a technology encompassed in the famous "dyno caps" of the Capsule Corporation which, upon exploding, produced automobiles, air cars, mini-planes, and comfortable, well-stocked little houses.

Fans of ***DBZ*** who've never sampled the original series are in for a real treat with this boxed set containing the first ***Dragon Ball*** movie and the first 13 episodes of the original TV series. They'll enjoy the comic spectacle of their favorite characters captured in their formative stages. Goku is a naive, hungry little boy (who catches and roasts a wolf at one point to assuage his appetite) who is suddenly plunged into the larger human society of men and women and mightily confused about their differences. Bulma is a hot teenaged babe on the make for a stud. Yamcha is a handsome and dashing desert bandit who is painfully shy around Bulma. Chi-Chi is a chubby little girl with a lethal helmet who effortlessly decapitates a rampaging dinosaur in her first scene and gives little hint of the relentless nag she'll become in ***DBZ***. Roshi is (and has remained) a harmless old pervert.

The story's origins in the 16th-century Chinese text ***Journey to the West*** (the legend of the Monkey King) are more easily noted here as the band of travelers grows with each episode and encounters strange creatures and magical humans, including the blustery Ox King and the shapeshifting pig Oolong in the course of their quest for the seven dragon balls.

The English dubs water down the provocative content of the original with digital cover-ups of nudity, excisions of violence, and rewriting of dialogue to soften Master Roshi's sexual proclivities. (There are no uncut versions of these tapes being offered.) This is where the paperback compilations of the ***Dragon Ball*** manga come in handy. Viz Communications has recently published Volumes 1 and 2, which match the first 13 episodes of the TV show practically scene for scene but keep intact creator Akira Toriyama's ribald sense of humor. See the tapes first, and then read the manga to appreciate the missing gags.
Brian Camp

THE INCAN AND THE RESTLESS

NAZCA

VOL. 2: BLOOD RIVALS and VOL. 3: BETRAYER OF HUMANITY

Pioneer • English VHS/Subtitled VHS/Bilingual DVD • 90 mins. • US$24.98/$29.98/$29.98 • Vol. 2: PIDA-7182V; Vol. 3: PIDA-7183V • Two camps of reincarnated Inca fight for the fate of the world

To his own surprise, Kyoji Miura (a mild-mannered, kind-hearted high school student) discovers that he is the reincarnation of Bilka, an ancient Inca warrior. Complicating things is the fact that Kyoji's *kendo* teacher, Tate, is the reincarnation of the greatest warrior of all the Inca: Yawaru. In their past lives, Yawaru and Bilka were sworn enemies, each serving a different ruler, each fighting for a different ideal, and both fighting over the same woman, the priestess Aquira. Aquira has been reincarnated as Yuka, Tate's one-time fiancée, although she now also has strong feelings for Kyoji. Apparently time can't heal *all* wounds....

These two volumes of ***Nazca*** continue the story of Yawaru's quest to create a perfect world by unleashing a powerful force called Iriyatesse. This immense power is actually the life force of the Earth, and can be used for good and evil purposes. Yawaru intends to save mankind from its follies by creating a kingdom of the chosen, but to do it, he needs help from other ancient Incas.

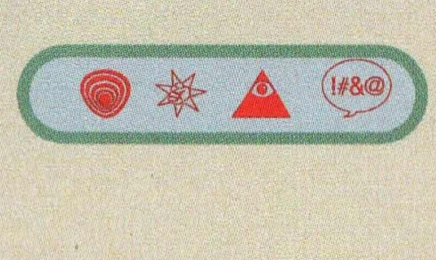
As Tate gets closer to his goal, he realizes that there are more sleeping souls around Japan, and he decides to awaken them so that they may join his side. Unfortunately for him, the idea is only partially successful, as the souls in question align themselves with Bilka instead. Unconcerned, Yawaru continues his plans, including a "test firing" of Iriyatesse near Mt. Aso, which completely destroys a small town. As if this wasn't enough, Yawaru also locates a somewhat unorthodox Inca priest who helps him literally suck the life out of another town, for a bigger "demonstration" of Iriyatesse's power.

As far as plot development goes, these two tapes take things fairly slowly, making sure that there is time enough for character development. The past of nearly every character and their relationships in Inca times is well explored. Flashbacks are frequent, and provide important clues as to the motivations of the characters in the present day. One of the most interesting revelations deals with the warrior Ellelah, a female Inca who fought on Bilka's side against Jigumi, the rampaging, homicidal maniac under Yawaru's command. Now, however, Ellelah has been reincarnated as Tatsuko, the half-sister of Shiagami, the reincarnation of Jigumi. Complicating this is the fact that Tatsuko didn't know her relation to Shiagami in this life, and fell in love with him!

The animation on these tapes is good, as always. The character designs by Hirotoshi Sano are a bit strange at first, but grow on you pretty fast. One impressive feat is the way in which Kyoji's and Shiagami's faces can become distorted with rage and hate, greatly adding to the emotional content of the battle scenes between them. The flashbacks to Incan times are also nicely done, being visually indistinguishable from the present day story. While initially a bit confusing, this actually makes the story seem much more alive, and emphasizes the influence of the past on the current events. Thankfully, the grating computer graphics are reduced in these tapes, as we only see the giant golden shrine for a very short time.

Overall, ***Nazca***'s original storyline and intense characters continue to make the show one to watch. While it's difficult to actually *like* any of the characters, it is interesting to see their reactions and ambitions. If you are in the mood for something different, then ***Nazca*** is definitely the way to go, and these two tapes are a must-have if you intend to follow this unique story through to the end.

Adam Rehorn



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THE EIGHTH DEADLY SIN

SIN: THE MOVIE

ADV Films • English VHS/DVD • 60 mins. • US$19.98/$29.98 • VHSSN/001D (English VHS) • Based on the video game of the same name

Since its inception, the anime world has seen a great deal of flicks based on console and PC video games, a fair share of which seem to fall flat on their face somewhere in their production process. For reasons beyond my understanding, an inexplicable process takes place in which these titles make their way to America where hopeful fans snatch them off the shelves in search of an anime that can continue the storyline and display in animated glory the game they do so love. Among these botched video-game anime, somewhere in between ***Samurai Shodown*** and ***Variable Geo***, I'm relatively certain you'll find ***SiN: The Movie***.

Based on Activision's 1998 PC-based 3D shooter of similar name, ***SiN*** revolves around the butt-kicking antics of John Blade and his crack team of HARDCORPS operatives as they wade knee-deep through Freeport city's criminal elements, and later on, are pitted against busty villainess Elexis Sinclaire and her bio-monsters. HARDCORPS, by the way, is an organization that for all intents and purposes replaces the police at some critical point in the future, when a SWAT-style force is needed for even misdemeanor offenses.

For viewers out there who are veterans of the ***SiN*** PC game, I'm afraid there's not much in the way of continued plot lines, or even returning characters, for that matter. The most notable change between the two titles comes in the character department, where, if you played the game, you probably remember JC, Blade's mission-control man, computer hacker, and best friend. Unfortunately (is it really?), JC doesn't make it much past the opening credits before Blade has to put him down like a 15-year-old Golden Retriever…only bloodier. You may be wondering why the producers wanted to put JC to sleep like that, but soon you find out, in grand anime style, that he is really just being replaced by his much cuter female cousin named—brace yourselves…JC! Is this for real?

The plot behind ***SiN: The Movie*** really kicks off when we get a glimpse of Elexis Sinclaire's sinister plot for world domination through the use of nigh-invincible human bio-creatures that can bat tanks around like tin cans. Being the evil genius she is, though, Elexis still sees room for improvement. Enter Elise—a young girl whose genetic structure holds the key to the monsters' invincibility. Blade has her. Elexis wants her. Combat ensues.

Aside from his occupational woes, Blade is having some personal troubles as well. Years after Blade's father was gunned down in a drive-by shooting that SiNTek ordered (an incident that also left Blade with a cybernetic body), he is still trying to grapple with the fact that his old man was in bed with the mob. After Elexis gets the jump on HARDCORPS and takes Elise for her final experiments, Blade gets on the ball and attacks SiNTek HQ with JC. Even more combat ensues. I think we all know what happens after that, right?

What really sets ***SiN*** apart from all other game-based anime titles though, is the animation. That is, not the quality of it, but rather the total lack thereof. Mind you, even the most tolerant person who can dismiss the absurdity of the plot cannot possibly get past the terrible animation. Using the now popular and time-saving techniques of CG animation coupled with cel art, ***SiN*** shows that cutting corners sometimes can have odious results. Many scenes that picture the 3D-rendered Freeport City as the background look bland from lack of surface texturing and also end up with a heavy dose of pixelation. What's worse are scenes where a 2D cel-animated object is poorly overlayed onto a 3D background and dragged across it to create the effect of motion. Ever seen the bit in ***Monty Python*** where God's foot comes down and crushes someone? That's what it looks like—no joke. The animators of ***SiN*** really should have examined Shinichiro Watanabe's and Sunrise studio's phenomenal CG work in ***Cowboy Bebop***. Had they done that, the world would have been a slightly better place.

In the end, ***SiN: The Movie*** seems to go the extra mile to leave a sour flavor in the mouths of both fans of the PC-based ***SiN*** and the casual anime viewer. I am really stressed to find any merit in it whatsoever. If *only* it exhibited that subtle so-bad-it's-good quality that many a kung-fu film has shown us, I might see recommending it to rent, but what's the point? Someone should see about contacting the Vatican and having them add one more to the Seven Deadly Sins….

Matt Lopez

POSTAPOCALYPSE GORE DANCE

APOCALYPSE ZERO

KAKUGO THE FINAL SOLDIER • BATTLE 2

Anime Works • English VHS/Subtitled VHS • 45 mins. • US$19.95/$19.95 • AWVD-0012 (English VHS) • Crass, but classic

The back of the box says, "with more gore, violence, disembowelment, and flesh-ripping fight scenes than ever seen before." They're not kidding, but in a good way. ***Apocalypse Zero*** is one of those wacky gems you always hope you'll find at the video store—something so out there, you'll be dying to show it to your friends and watch their jaws hit the floor. It's both incredibly gross and so outrageous that it's laugh-out-loud funny.

For those of you who came in late, ***Apocalypse Zero*** is the story of a guy named Kakugo, his powered "Zero" armor and his deadly fight with his evil sibling, Harara. The pair got their powers through a helluva lot of harsh training by their father, and Kakugo came out of it with a yen to protect regular humans from the kind of freaky mutant scum that prey on them in this postapocalyptic world. But Harara decides they're only good for target practice, and sends gruesome, demonic minions to harass Kakugo and his pals. These demons are like *nothing* you've seen before. In this volume, you get a sexy, no-panties nurse-girl who goes for the ol' seduce-and-slaughter trick, and a little old man who can attack with both his mighty morphin' family jewels and lethally sharp spit-sicles. (Man, who thinks this stuff up?) The fights are the other highlight, although I'd have laid my good money down even if they hadn't been all that great, whatever—but you get some really good throw-downs. And weirdly enough, the hero even looks good in a Speedo.

Finally, I've gotta give special kudos to the English dub cast—the voices are really, really good, the dialogue is priceless, and no matter how cheesy it gets, they make you believe they're *serious*. Right on.

Angeline Kim

REVIEWS ★ BEST OF THE WEST anime WEST

EYES, HARD-BOILED
GOKU II: MIDNIGHT EYE

Urban Vision • English VHS/Subtitled VHS • 60 mins. • US$19.95/$29.95 • UV1050 (English VHS) • Ask about his magic eye and staff

There are lots of stories about private eyes. There are even stories about eyeballs (Georges Bataille's "Story of the Eye," 'fer instance). But there are very few stories about a private eye's eyeballs.

Goku II: Midnight Eye is the standout in this marginal genre. Our P.I. protagonist, manly man Goku, has a micro-computer terminal for a left peeper, which, via satellite hookup, can access any computer in the world.

The first ***Goku*** video (based on the manga by Buichi Terasawa, creator of ***Space Adventure Cobra***, lest anyone should forget) told the tale of how Goku first acquired his defining ocular augmentation. This, the second and final OAV from 1985 (you *do* remember 1985, don't you?), depicts Goku at the top of his game telling seemingly everyone in Tokyo 2011 within earshot about said eyeball and how it could launch nuclear missiles (and presumably download entire records by Radiohead) if he only wished it so.

After a classically James Bond-esque opening sequence, featuring action/spectacle of pleasingly no consequence to the rest of the story, Goku meets a Woman In Trouble who hires the famed private dick to find her missing brother. Seems he's been turned into a dangerous and psychotic secret weapon by the military and, now that's he's gone A.W.O.L, everyone stands to lose something of value (their lives, their powerful secret weapon, underwear). Goku does his bit, and unravels a mystery or two, takes a few licks, and he's out of there. So are you.

Although directed by Yoshiaki Kawajiri, of ***Wicked City*** and ***Ninja Scroll*** fame, this is pretty basic meat-and-potatoes mid-'80s anime. The first ***Goku*** looked equally against the wall in the budget department, but benefited from a couple of truly bizarre images and events (can you forget, or forgive, naked women with motorcycle handlebars mounted upon their shoulders?). This second helping only leaves the impression of a low-stakes ***Blade Runner*** replicant, hard-boiled future, white-haired Roy Batty lookalikes, and all. With a bit more prime pulp sensibility, ***Goku II*** could have been at least as much nutty fun as its predecessor was. The key phrase here is "could have."

Still, you've got to cough up some admiration for the hard-line tough-guy tactics of Teresawa's screenplay, which gives Goku at the end no more new insight into his own inner nature than "As far as women go, I'm just as blind as the next guy."

Speaking as the proverbial next guy, I'm feeling your pain, bub. Here's mud in your eye.

Patrick Macias

SUPER-SIZED SNEAK TACTICS
SAILOR VICTORY

Anime Works • English VHS/Subtitled VHS • 60 mins. •US$19.95/$19.95 • AWVD-9940 (English) • Girls and robots get busy on bad guys

How do giant ninja robots piloted by sassy, foul-mouthed schoolgirls who must twirl around naked before they can get into their robots to fight sound to you? Hear that ticking? It's the bomb! Okay, so it's entertaining to Dr. Brown, but I have a weakness for ninjas, giant robots, magical spin-around-naked-for-no-good-reason sequences, and camp, so you can see its appeal to me. To the serious anime fan this show might be too goofy or too silly, but if you have a cheese tooth, this is the perfect way to spend an hour. The animation isn't breathtaking but based on the box art, I'd expected to see a lot of cheap movement—y'know, the kind that saves money by slowly sliding frozen images of characters fighting across the background toward each other with a lot of speed-line effects? (And then, when the two frozen images meet, the screen turns white and a big, lame-looking flashing explosion fades to new images of the characters frozen in a different position, followed by one of them exploding or passing out.) Well, this anime doesn't try to fool anybody with that cheap stuff—instead, it gives you good action scenes with crazy ninja robot attacks. The fighting is really funny because the ninja robots use giant ninja weaponry and tactics. You say that doesn't sound funny? When you think about the basic premise of the art of *ninjistu*, its effectiveness relies primarily on stealth and remaining unseen. How can you sneak around in a 80-foot-tall robot? Well, they do, and you'll have to watch the video to find out how.

The most surprising thing about ***Sailor Victory*** is that the English dub is really good, and adds a lot of flavor to the show. The acting is good, the voices match the characters, and they speak (for the most part) like people actually speak. The dialogue has a real smart-ass appeal to it, and I commend the writers and actors for having the sense not to just go with a literal, kung fu-style translation, but to go the step further to fully Americanize the language with contemporary slang words in a natural-sounding, humorous manner. I had fun watching this anime!

Dr. Brown

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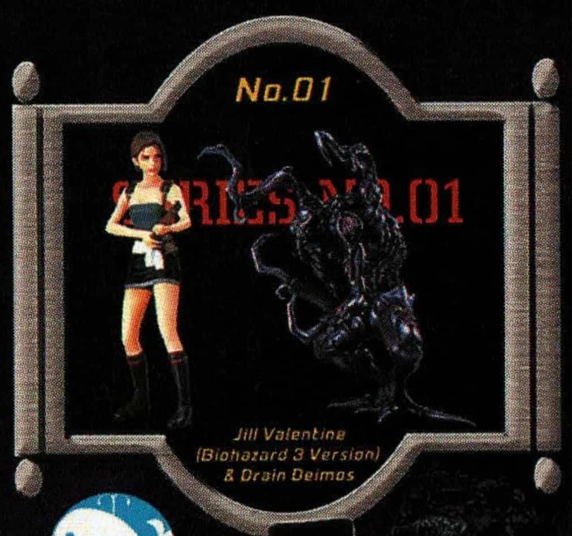

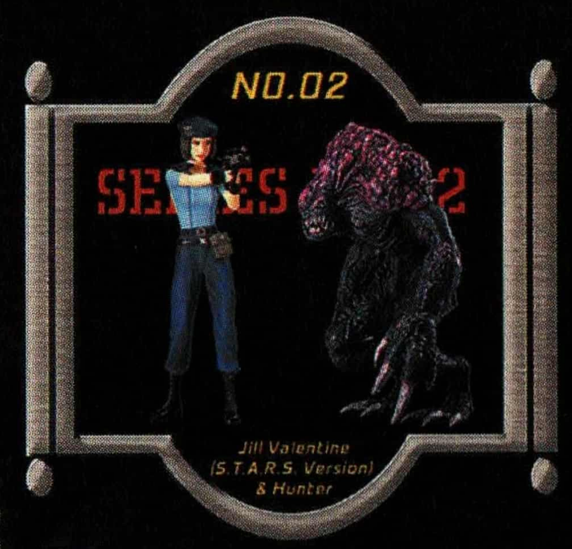

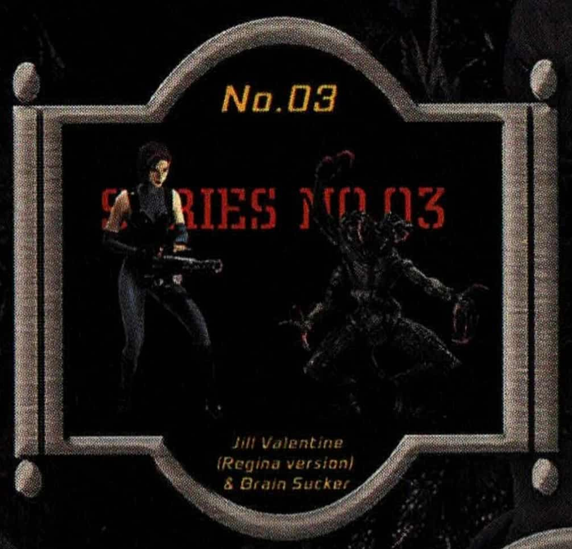

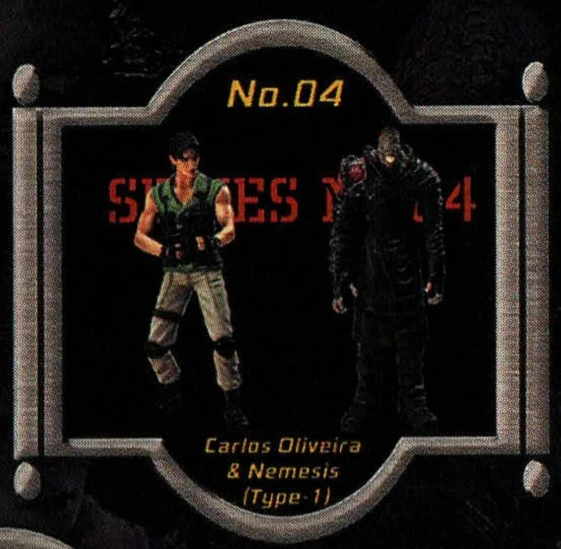

MOBY DICK TOYS

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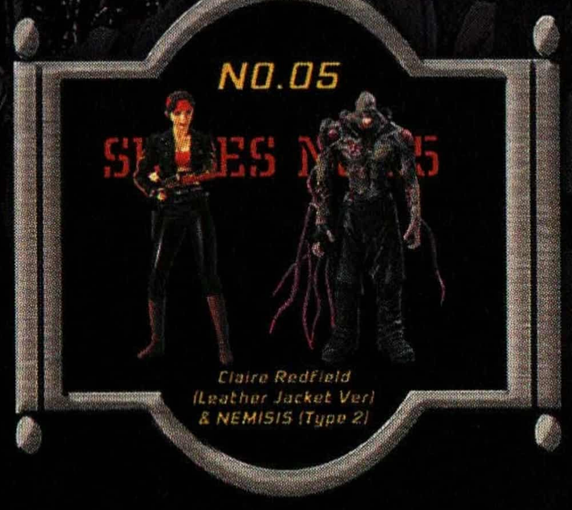
Coming Soon

Chris
(Veronica version)



Coming Soon

Tyrant
(Biohazard version)

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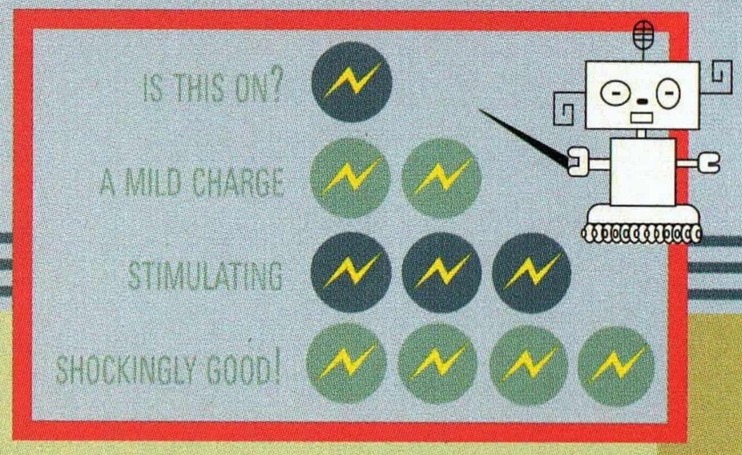


AV

Dr. Brown's

Game Crisis

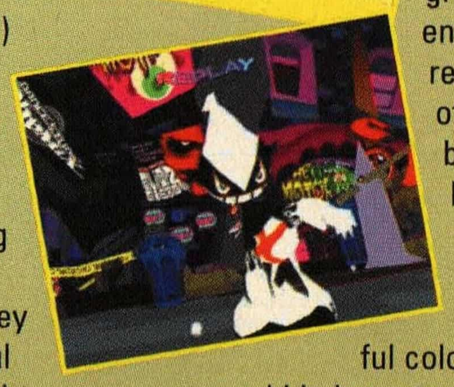
"GEEK ABSOLUTE"

COOL COOL TOON

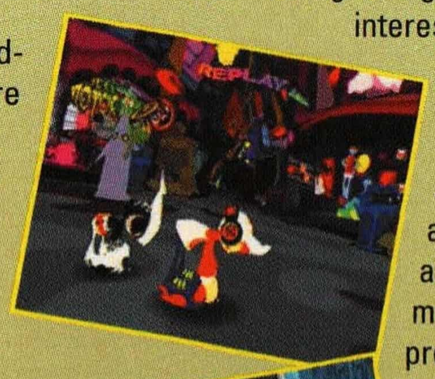
System: Dreamcast
Type: Dancing
Developer/Publisher: SNK
Available: Now (Japan)
Price: US$59.95

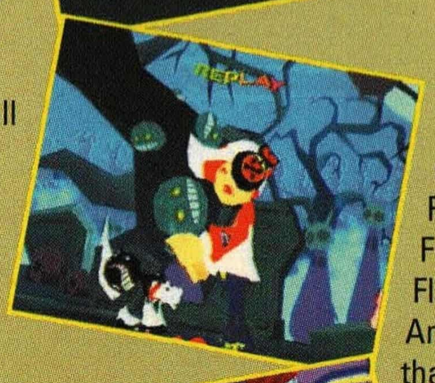
When SNK announced they would no longer make games for release in the States and recalled all their existing games from retail stores, a loud cry of despair was heard from geeks all over the world. What was so special about SNK? I'll tell you. Patrick Macias, the assistant editor of this magazine and a dear close personal friend of mine, once postulated that when a video gamer had played enough video games they would eventually reach a state of being that I call "Geek Absolute"—a state of being in which the line between video games and reality gets blurry and real life is secondary to "virtual" life. When a hardcore gamer is nearing this condition they might show one or more of these early warning signs: 1) Being more interested in spending more time playing video games than trying to find someone to kiss. 2) Having excessive knowledge about outdated consoles and playing old-ass games that everyone forgot about years ago, maintaining that they are far superior to the more powerful games of today. 3) Feeling compelled to spend obscene amounts of time searching for every single special item of any given game, regardless of the item's value in relation to the outcome of the game. This obsessive/compulsive desire can only be satisfied when all 130 magical kyber crystals, each gold-colored neo-magical gnome statue, and every single one of 49 nearly invisible walnut-sized enchanted fairy farts that are only accessible for 3 seconds per 15 hours of game play and are defended by armies of super-fast gigantic monsters that kill you instantly just by looking at you have been collected.

If you know anybody showing one or more of these symptoms, it means they may be on the road to video-game enlightenment. This higher state of consciousness results in the love of SNK games more than any other games in the world. Why? It's simple—SNK made good games, and lots of them. Games that stand out and remain playable for years after they are created. Sad to see such a great company go, but at least they went out with a bang by creating the best dancing game I've ever been addicted to—***Cool Cool Toon.*** It's an unusual game for SNK because it is 3D-rendered and polygon-driven instead of 2D and sprite-based. This may upset hardcore SNK loyalists, but there is no reason to panic because the transition from 2D to 3D is successful. The essence of SNK's quirky 2D graphics is still intact, if not enhanced when 3D-rendered. The atmosphere of the game is an intriguing blend of cute and creepy. Prepare to be boggled by the happy, macabre theme brought on by the unorthodox mixture of bright cheerful colors with bizarre-looking, morbid characters and spooky environments. The graphics are great in terms of the characters' movement, design, and overall game presentation. Not bad for one of SNK's first 3D games; the only real flaw is from some occasional solid-matter overlap, like the occasional dancer's body parts passing through other body parts instead of being repelled.



Graphics are important, but not *as* important as music. It's tricky to make music for dancing games, because most people have to keep playing the same levels repeatedly until they can progress to the next stage. The songs that you dance to in ***Cool Cool Toon*** are the best kind because they grow on you the more you hear them. After failing the same level for the tenth time, the tunes in this game got stuck in my head for days on end. At first the music boggled me and I wasn't sure what to think about it, but within hours I was hooked. Even the tracks I didn't like at first grew on me quickly. ***Cool Cool Tune*** definitely has the best music in any dancing game, and I can dig it, but it might be a little "far out" for some tastes. I hate to fall back on a lame cop-out by saying it's very "Japanese," so I won't. What I mean to say is that the music is different from most American styles because it blends together different kinds of music that most people in America couldn't imagine being mixed together. An example of this is the beautiful opera/techno song that, believe it or not, sounds really cool. Perhaps the strangest is the country-western/trance song, "White Cowboy," which also sounds good.





Along with good music, this game has an interesting story that gives it far more depth than other dancing games. The Story mode is a lot of fun—you start out a little kid, and finish the game as a young adult. The dancers you dance against along the way add even more appeal because as you progress they encourage you instead of berating you for failure like the rude voice announcer in ***Dance Dance Revolution***. Each new level builds your skill as you advance toward your ultimate goal—to win the final Flitz contest against the legendary Flitz King. "Flitz" is the word used instead of dance in the game, and I'm not sure why, but I suspect because it sounds funny to say things like "Let's Flitz," "Flitz Fever," or "There's a place in France where the naked ladies Flitz"(?). Something like that. Anyway, it's little details like this that add flavor to ***Cool Cool Toon***, making it one of the most entertaining games available for any system.

Aside from Story mode, players can choose the Single Flitz mode and jump straight into various songs depending on the character they choose to play. All the

dancers you compete against in Story mode, if beaten, become playable characters with multiple outfits in the Single or Double Flitz modes, so you and your friend can see who can have a bigger Flitz contest. And there's no doubt in my mind that this game's got the best choreography ever seen on a video game. The dancers have a variety of styles ranging from hip-hop-inspired breakdancing to authentic African tribal dances. The multitude of cool moves in this game will impress you, if not inspire you to beat cheeks to your nearest club to pour some brown gravy on your white shirt and do the funky chicken.

Now that we have covered most of the essential parts of the game, like design, graphics, music, content, and style, what is missing from this review? Gameplay! ***Cool Cool Toon*** puts all other dancing games to shame with its innovative control system that utilizes a combination of moving the analog stick and inputting correctly colored button commands to the beat of the music. It's actually a little more complex than that, and you'll need a few songs to warm up to it, but once you've gotten past your initial disorientation, this game can become supremely addictive. Hours of my life have disappeared along with all my worries and concerns while immersed in the surreal world of ***Cool Cool Toon*** struggling to Flitz my way to the top.

The only complaint I had about this game is, it can be a bit too difficult unless you lower the difficulty setting in the Options menu. Aside from that, ***Cool Cool Toon*** is by far the best in its genre, beating all other dancing video games by a wide margin—a true testimony to the incredible imagination and creative talent of SNK, who has raised the quality of life for geeks like me by making so many great games. In closing this review, the motto of the James Brown Soul Food restaurant chain—"If you don't like our food, you don't got no soul"—comes to mind to describe closed-minded gamers who can't dig a dope game like ***Cool Cool Toon***. "If you don't like this game, you ain't got no soul."

Next Time: Heads exploding in a flurry of flying fists can only mean one thing—the *toughest* guy, period, gets mean on the PlayStation 1 with a new ***Fist of the North Star*** import game. I hope my PlayStation doesn't explode.

Get this—tonight I'm going to start standing in line at 3:00 a.m. outside the official PlayStation store at Sony's futuristic vision of a shopping mall, the Metreon, in order to try and get my sweaty hands on a PlayStation 2! Win or lose, you'll hear about it! If I'm lucky and actually get a PlayStation 2...don't turn brown with envy!

Rating:

A Dr. Brown Special Report!

WAITING FOR PS2

The people begin lining up around 9:30 p.m. at the official PlayStation store in San Francisco, which opens at 10:00 a.m. the next day. The line grows longer by the hour as new arrivals bring sleeping bags, lawn chairs, and most of all, hope. With such a huge demand and limited number of consoles available, the only way to get one was clearly to slap the cold, hard sidewalk with my cheeks and wait for that magical hour to arrive when the store doors open and it's my turn to toss off 325 smackers and grin with the other 59 idiots who camped out under the streetlights to get one of the 60 PlayStation 2's available. Felt sorry for the disgruntled number 61, and all I can say is he should have gotten there before 5:00 in the morning, and it serves him right for sleeping in so late.

Was it worth the wait? I keep asking myself. Yes and No. Yes, it was worth it, because now I can get massive cool points just by having one and can instantly impress people anywhere I go. It's amazing what saying the words "I've got a PS2" out loud can do for you. Yesterday I went to Tori Spelling's private party on the top floor of a high-rise penthouse and watched 15 back-to-back secret unaired episodes of ***Beverly Hills 90210***. Two days ago I was invited to attend Chelsea Clinton's birthday party in the White House, providing I let her borrow my PS2 for a couple of days—naturally I refused the invitation. Quentin Tarantino asked me if I would co-star with my PS2 in his upcoming movie... okay, that last one was a lie—he doesn't want me in the movie, just my PlayStation 2.

Was it worth shivering on the sidewalk all night, the wind an icy snake sliding into my sleeping bag, licking me with a frosty blue tongue? Yes, because it can also play DVDs. So now I can play DVDs on my PlayStation 2 instead of the DVD player I bought last year that is both easier to use and works better than my PS2. Well, I'll be honest—I didn't buy it for the DVD player, I bought it for the games. However, the launch games so far do not impress me, and I don't feel like throwing down 50+ clams to buy a first-generation game that sucks, so I'm going to wait until more games are available.

The best part of the wait was seeing the city come to life after its nightly slumber and watching the people trickle out wherever they hide at night and grow into a stronger current flowing down the sidewalk on their way to wherever they hide in the day.

Occasionally somebody would stop briefly and ask us what we were lined up for, then scoff and make a funny sour-grape face when we told them. Fun? Sort of. Worth it? For the experience, yes? For the PS2...no comment.

Dr. Brown

"A fortune teller asked me if I wanted my mind read. I said no...I like it brown."

One thing I can say about my PS2 that was worth waiting for is that it makes my old PS1 games look much better. It doesn't work on all games, but I tried it on *Vagrant Story* by Squaresoft, and check out the screenshots of the sexiest villain ever to grace a PlayStation 1 or 2! Sydney's a slender prophet who likes to show off what he's got, but unfortunately, on the PS1 his abdomen looks like a bunch of squares instead of a smooth stomach. Now look at the difference the PS2 makes! Sydney's stomach is smooth and fleshy-looking. For a beautiful game like *Vagrant Story*, the PS2 is worth it just to see the graphical improvement.

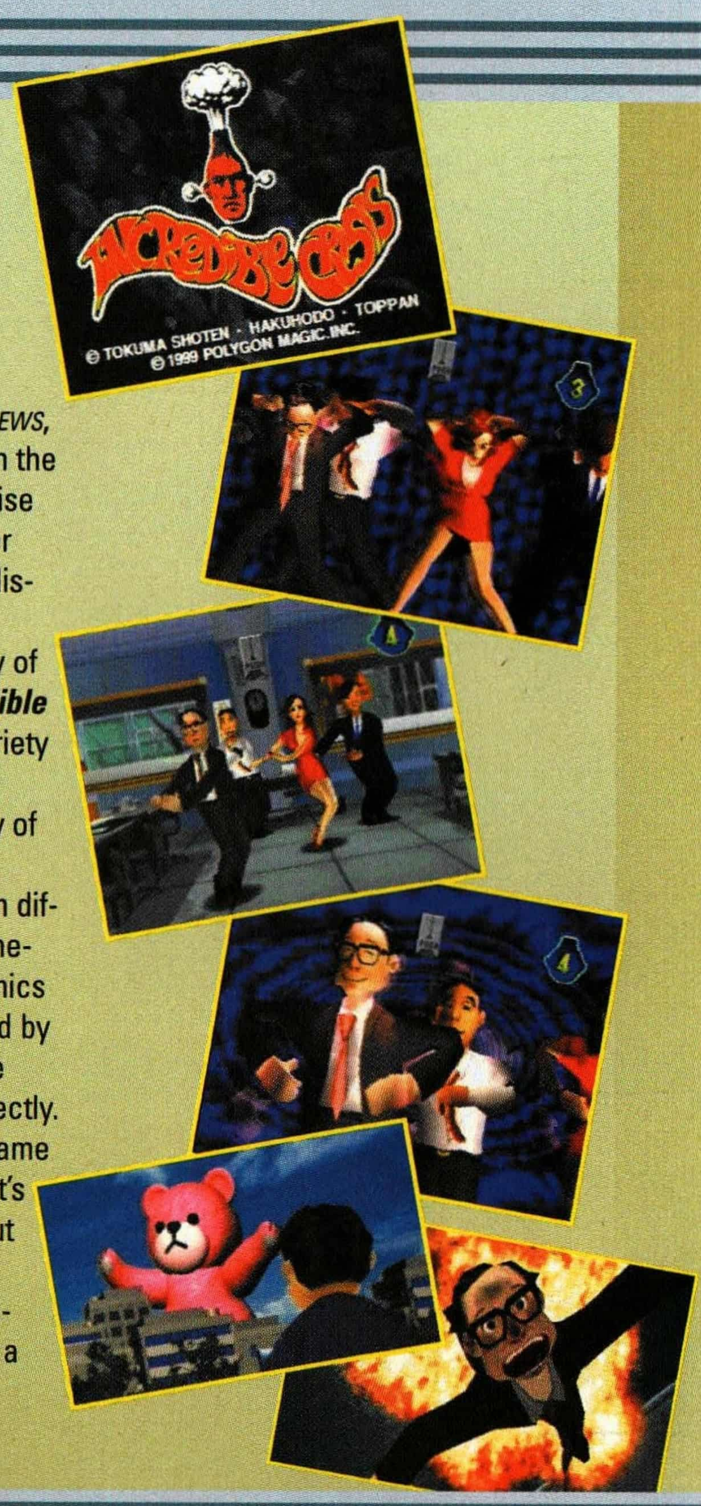
Visual comparisons between PS1 (top images) and PS2 (bottom images)

AV

"Math is hard!"
—talking Barbie™ toy recalled for her sexist phrases

INCREDIBLE CRISIS

System: PlayStation 1
Type: Humor/mini-games
Developer: Polygon Magic
Publisher: Titus
Available: Now (U.S., Japan)
Price: US$19.99



The PlayStation has a variety of games available that are easily placed into the standard five money-making genres: racing, action, role-playing, puzzle, and sports. Occasionally an unusual game upsets the system and can't be shuffled off into one of these broad categories and either is classified as "Misc," or, if it's a big hit, it creates a new sub-genre. If it's a really, *really* big hit, it could even start its own genre—e.g. ***Parappa the Rappa*** started the dance/music genre in the states. ***Incredible Crisis***, from Titus, probably won't start its own genre but it deserves to with comical spirit and entertaining gameplay.

Video games can provoke a variety of emotions from gamers, which can get quite intense depending on the quality of the game and the involvement of the gamer. For instance, if you're sitting at home alone in the dark with headphones on, volume turned up, playing a ***Resident Evil*** game in front of a decent-sized TV when a maggot-infested, flesh-rotted, scabbed-up, moaning zombie with one eyeball hanging down from a black socket bursts out of the ground and starts chewing on the character you're playing, it can scare your pants off faster than you can make a mess in them. Scary games are a dime a dozen. Intense driving games and explosive shooters generate the feeling of excitement. Wacky platformers make people feel happy. Mind-bending puzzle games burn brain juice. Full-contact sports games and fighters make players' blood burn. There are an assortment of emotions games can produce…except for the one emotion that truly separates us from the rest of the animal kingdom, which is humor. According to the *Weekly World News*, rats laugh when you tickle them, but they don't throw pies in the cats' faces or make jokes about cheese. Hyenas make a noise that sounds like laughter, but it's actually just barking. Higher primates have a playful nature, but as yet not one ape has discovered the classic "slip on the banana peel" gag. Only humans laugh and play video games—but how often do any of us do both at the same time? Not nearly enough, but ***Incredible Crisis*** is here to change all that with its wacky story and variety of challenging mini-games.

The story follows the daily activities of a Japanese family of four. Each family member has several mini-games that are woven together into a single frantic story. The games vary in difficulty from mindless button-mashing, to brain-bending mathematical games—I would keep a calculator handy. The graphics are appropriate for the subject matter and are complimented by the zany sound effects. The music is Ska, which is a strange hybrid of punk rock and reggae that, oddly enough, fits perfectly.

The bottom line is, ***Incredible Crisis*** is a well-balanced game that is a fresh breath of absurdity in a video game world that's become stale and formulaic. The only complaint I have about this game is it's too short—so hopefully the sequel hinted about at the end of the game will be a lot longer. I highly recommend ***Incredible Crisis*** to anyone with a PlayStation and a sense of humor.

Dr. Brown Rating:

AV

WARIO LAND 3

System: Game Boy Color
Type: Action/Platform
Developer/Publisher: Nintendo
Available: Now (Japan, U.S.)
Price: Approx. US$29.99

Nintendo's Game Boy Color has been around for quite some time now, but until 2000 the ***Pokémon***-powered portable hadn't received much in the way of original, Color-exclusive software. All three versions of ***Pokémon*** were strictly black-and-white, and titles like ***Zelda DX*** and ***Super Mario Bros. Deluxe*** were only upgrades of existing software. Nintendo's 2000 lineup, though, has remedied the situation with playable, original games like the ***Bionic Commando*** sequel; ***Metal Gear Solid***; ***Pokémon Gold*** and ***Silver***, and, at the top of the pile, ***Wario Land 3***.

The ***Wario Land*** series was spawned from 1992's ***Super Mario Land 2***, where Mario faced off against his alter ego and arch-nemesis Wario; in the sequel, ***Super Mario Land 3: Wario Land***, you took the part of the evil one, searching for treasures in an otherwise straightforward ***Mario***-style adventure. ***Wario Land 2*** changed things a bit with innovative branching storylines, and ***Wario Land 3*** takes another, ***Super Mario 64***-like approach: fewer stages but with multiple goals in each. Previous games featured one hidden treasure chest per level, but ***WL3*** hides four, and you've got to find the appropriately colored key first.

Much of each level is initially inaccessible; to open blocked paths (and find more chests), Wario needs to gain new powers. Some treasures will let him jump higher and punch harder, but to snag some of the better loot you'll need to master Wario's other forms, which he takes on when he comes in contact with enemies. You see, as in the prequel, Wario cannot die. Rather, when he comes in contact with an enemy he usually takes on another form: get hit with a donut and you become the pudgy but powerful Fat Wario; get bitten by a bat and transform into flying Vampire Wario; get zapped and become Electric Wario. Sometimes you'll want to be hit by enemies and use the resulting powers to reach the chests, and sometimes you'll need to avoid them lest the uncontrollable side effects of your powers lead you away from the goal. And sometimes, to snag a treasure, you'll need to play a (thankfully short) round of miniature golf.

WL3's graphics are above-average for the Game Boy Color, which is to say they resemble a 1994-or-so NES game. Despite the limitations of the system, the characters and backgrounds are drawn well, in the style (although without the charm) of Miyamoto's original ***Mario*** games. Tunes are decent but nothing you'll find yourself humming later. The text translation is fine enough, but purists will like the English/Japanese option.

While most portable titles have traditionally been scaled-down translations of their home-system cousins, the ***Wario Land*** series is one of the few original and exclusive lines that the GB can boast. In some ways, it's a shame that these innovative and highly playable games probably won't see a juiced-up home console incarnation—although the Game Boy Color's library will be stronger for it.

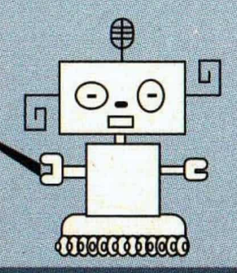
Chris Kohler Rating:

© 2000 Nintendo

MODEL KIT RATINGS:

Skill
1) Easy: Not much thought required
2) Medium: HAS TO have paint at least
3) Tough: NEEDS glue, paint, and possibly surgery
4) Death: Attempt only if you're a pro, or you need gray hair

Detail
1) Low: Basic, but no goodies
2) Medium: Better, some vents and verniers
3) High: Lots of panels, verniers lines and other cool features
4) Insane: Detail at a pathological level



KIT

Adam Rehorn's MechWorks

THE ROUGH ROAD AHEAD! A GRITTY REALITY!

As I have said before, I feel that every model should be glued together, if you're really going to go at it in a meaningful way. The obvious corollary to this is that once something has been glued, it will most likely be a mess. If everything has gone correctly, then there will be glue seams on each subassembly you've built, and there will probably be body filler too. Obviously, the task of actually building the model is only now beginning.

You certainly can't leave the kit's pieces in their current state and expect anyone to admire your work! In order to get the kit ready for painting and detailing, you have to undertake one of the most critical tasks in modeling: sanding.

Sanding is an absolutely essential part of good modeling form. No matter how good the kit, no model will ever fit together perfectly. Remember, the whole idea of serious modeling can be summed up by my favorite saying: "Many from one and one from many." The first part deals with detailing and painting, and we'll get to that later; the second part deals with gluing and sanding. Your goal as a modeler is to take many pieces and assemble them into something that looks like it came as one piece. To do this, you're going to have to get rid of those glue seams!

To remove glue and filler, I find that conventional dry sandpaper is best. Wet/dry hobby films are expensive, and filler can really kill them, so they're best kept in reserve. For rough work, I use 120-grade sandpaper, which is easily found at any local hardware store. Unfortunately, most conventional sandpaper I've used doesn't have much staying power. After a few kits, the sand starts to fall off, mostly due to the bending. To greatly increase the life of my sandpaper, I cover the backside with masking tape. I cover it with strips one way and then the other, sort of like plywood. This prevents a lot of bending, and will allow one piece of sandpaper to do for a lot more kits than it should!

Before sanding, I take my knife and *carefully* scrape off a lot of the excess glue and filler, so that there is less for the sandpaper to do. Once this is done, take the 120-grade paper and begin to gently sand off the remainder. It is important to try and avoid sanding across yourself. In other words, once you pick a direction, stick with it. When sanding near detail, it is important to try and avoid removing the detail as well. This can be really difficult, and sometimes impossible. This is made harder by the fact that many details span knee and shoulder flares, and these are areas traditionally associated with heavy sanding. In some cases, it's possible to re-etch detail with your knives, but more often than not, once it's gone, it's gone for good.

Often there are parts that are too small to use a big piece of sandpaper on. In this case, emery boards are a good substitute. They are small and easily manageable, and can often flex into areas that sandpaper can't reach.

When the rough sanding is done, you can go to your wet/dry films and smooth things out. Wet sanding with progressively finer grades of film is a great way to get rid of the damage caused by the 120-grade stuff. It also gives a much better surface for painting. Wet/dry films are available from several companies, but the best are the Testors Hobby Sanding Films. You get five different (and color coded!) grades in one pack, and they're fairly cheap. Because they are built for modeling, they also tend to last a long time.

***NEXT TIME:** Setting up for painting!*

KIT

MS IN ACTION!! MSN-02 ZEONG

Info: Plastic toy
From: Bandai
Price: approx. US$20

The American-release ***Gundam Wing*** action figures will give you a pretty good idea what the import-only Mobile Suit in Action!! toys are like—four-inch poseable figures made of rubbery vinyl, fully painted and accompanied by an assortment of fun accessories. After producing a near-complete lineup of mobile suits from the original 1979 ***Gundam*** series, Bandai's now moving on to some of the more exotic (and huge!) bad-guy mecha. Among these is the legless giant Zeong, the half-completed monster that finally put paid to the original Gundam.

Despite its pedal impediment, the oversized Zeong is still just as tall as the Gundam, so this toy is a surprisingly hefty chunk of solid vinyl. It's also fully articulated, with movable shoulders, elbows, wrists, neck, and waist—not to mention movable thruster nozzles under its voluminous skirt. Even better, it can recreate all the Zeong's signature gimmicks, thanks to its detachable head and forearms; two types of forearm-tethering cable are provided, plus a variety of alternate hands, including a pair with independently movable fingers.

Still, a robot with no legs can't do a whole lot other than sit there and point menacingly. For die-hard fans of the original ***Gundam*** story, the Zeong is a nice recreation of this memorable adversary, with every extra feature they could reasonably desire. But less hardcore fans might be better off saving their greenbacks for something with a bit more poseability and play value.

Mark Simmons

CD

COMPACT VIEW
anime cd review

COCOA: "TURN A" GUNDAM ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK III

Star Child • 59:26 (21 tracks)
KICA-508 • ¥3059

Say what you will about the works of Yoshiyuki Tomino—you love them, you hate them, you think they're hackwork, whatever…they pretty much *all* have great music. ***"Turn A" Gundam*** is Tomino's second collaboration with this generation's star anime composer, Yoko Kanno, and it's a leap ahead in quality—even for Kanno—from her previous work on ***Brain Powered*** (which was pretty good itself by my reckoning). ***"Turn A"*** is Kanno at her most for-the whole-family swelling-orchestra movie soundtrack, with standout vocal pieces. The first track gets things off to a spirited start, promptly moving into the Indian-flavored music that's been her signature for the series. As a plus, the CD booklet comes with a foldout with a lovely line art piece of the entire "Turn A" cast and full-size stickers of all three soundtrack covers. A must-buy for Kanno followers; this is some of her best work yet.

Julie Davis

TOY

Toy Boy illustration by James Boren

Patrick Macias'

TOY BOY

McFARLANE'S 3D ANIMATION FROM JAPAN

Info: 6"-7" action figures
From: McFarlane Toys
Price: Approx. US$10 each

Is Todd McFarlane trying to take over the planet, or what? Not content with merely breaking comic-book sales records and buying up Mark McGwire's old baseballs, now his company, McFarlane Toys, is aiming to dominate the *otaku* demographic with a batch of "Animation From Japan" figures inspired by ***Akira, Tenchi Muyô!***, and ***Trigun***.

Long before this power move, McFarlane Toys already had a secure place in the hearts of action-figure folks everywhere. Let us speak of greatness. The Movie Maniacs series. The Kiss Alive series. The ***Yellow Submarine*** Beatles figures. Triumphs of design all. And while unsold ***Little Nicky*** toys may be destined for landfill in New Mexico, McFarlane's ***Spawn*** figures remain a hot item in Japan, even as they sell for outrageous prices (and we think we pay a lot for import goodies!).

Given the support that McFarlane Toys has on both sides of the Pacific, an anime line seems like a natural. But it wasn't easy. Toy-biz rumors tell of prototypes flying back and forth between our two great nations, with rejections from persnickety creators and last-minute redesigns flying left and right. Given these exacting circumstances, it's surprising that while these anime figures certainly look the business, they've all got one crucial design flaw.

Poseable these things are not, and that has to rank as a big letdown. I mean, what's the point of releasing a cool Kaneda figure and his spiffy red motorcycle separately if he can't actually be articulated to sit on the darn thing? Believe me, a few joints in the knees and elbows department go a long way toward customer satisfaction.

But once you get over the initial heartbreak, there are still enough individual good points about these "Animation from Japan" figures to keep a letter to the Better Business Bureau at bay. For starters, they all look fantastic, from precise sculptures to imaginative coloring to spot-on, almost microscopic detail.

One of the clear winners of the bunch is Tetsuo, from ***Akira***. The first thing you'll notice about him (aside from perhaps the every-vein-in-my-head-about-to-burst look on his face) is his Twinkie-sized, mutation arm ("the barf arm," as it was quickly christened here at *Animerica*)—which is bound to become a sure-fire conversation piece in any household. To their credit, McFarlane Toys are faithful to the original, even when that means getting icky. Their nightmarish renditions of John Carpenter's ***The Thing*** have got to be the grossest things ever to be put on Toys "R" Us shelves.

Tetsuo's buddy Kaneda suffers from a slightly Keanu Reeves-esque facial expression (read: "Duh."), but with laser gun and side-pack in tow—slung over his chest with flimsy rubber straps—he looks as fresh as the ***Akira*** movie poster did back in 1988. Yet without any detachable arms, or proper leg joints (though you can make him spectacularly pigeon-toed), he also seems to lack some basic play value that the others intrinsically have.

A real shame, then, that Kaneda can't sit on his own darn motorcycle, which resembles a fancy finished model kit you would have toiled away for hours on a few years back. These choppers seemed to go at the speed of light in ***Akira***, but the gauge on the dash here is set at a relatively piddling 130 km per hour (80.6 mph). It rolls around pretty well all the same, and you can even lift up the hood to examine the engine whenever you get that miniature-grease-monkey urge.

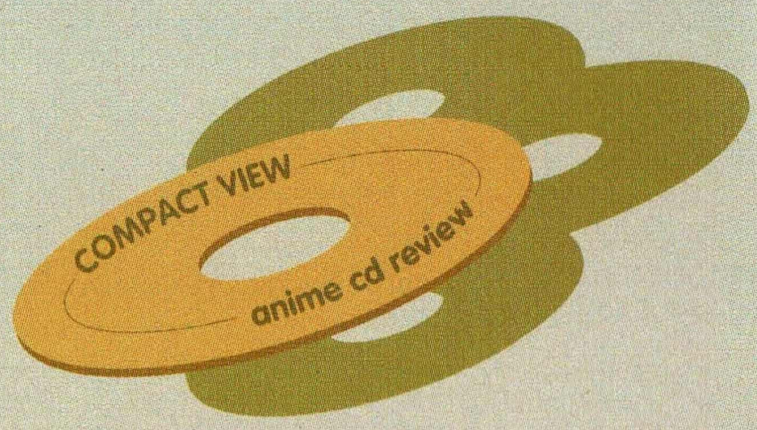
The Ryoko figure, from ***Tenchi Muyô!***, was unavailable for review, but it looks like another solid addition to the line, coming with a saber and everyone's favorite half-rabbit, half-cat Ryo-ohki.

Vash the Stampede, from ***Trigun***, might make for the best deal of the bunch, seeing as how he's saddled with a pleasing bounty of extras, including a Western-themed display stand, a pair of detachable arms (one with a cool hidden trick gun), a funky, bug-eyed black cat, and a crucifix on a chain to drape over his form.

I would say something about how Vash's long stiff legs could have been easily improved with bendable knee joints, but I think you've heard it all before somewhere. ★

Eww, what's that? Tetsuo's disgustingly fleshy arm (below) is a detailed gross-out. Vash (left), comes with the cute cat.

CD



ESCAFLOWNE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK

Victor • 60:46 (25 tracks)
VICL-60590 • ¥3045

Yes, it's an ***Escaflowne*** soundtrack. And yes, I had to have it. Of course I did—I grabbed all the ***Escaflowne*** TV soundtracks (even "Lovers Only") so fast I'm surprised I didn't leave burn marks on the store shelves. But if you asked me if I really thought I needed this soundtrack to the ***Escaflowne*** movie, I probably would say no. The composers are still Yoko Kanno (***Macross Plus, Cowboy Bebop***) and Hajime Mizoguchi (***Please Save My Earth, Jin-Roh***), but rather than repackage the TV series music (with the exception of Track 18, "Dance of Curse II," and bits and pieces here and there), they chose to take a new approach, and a distinctly different sound. This means that you get some interesting Indian-flavored tracks (Track 2, "First Vision," especially), but none of it recaptures the feeling of the previous series' music. Even the quite pretty vocals feel, at best, like new creations that don't have much to do with ***Escaflowne***. If you're not a Kanno or Mizoguchi connoisseur, or don't have a great deal emotionally invested in ***Escaflowne***, this is still a beautiful soundtrack. But I couldn't help but feel that this year, you'll be more likely to find the best work of both composers on other projects.
Julie Davis

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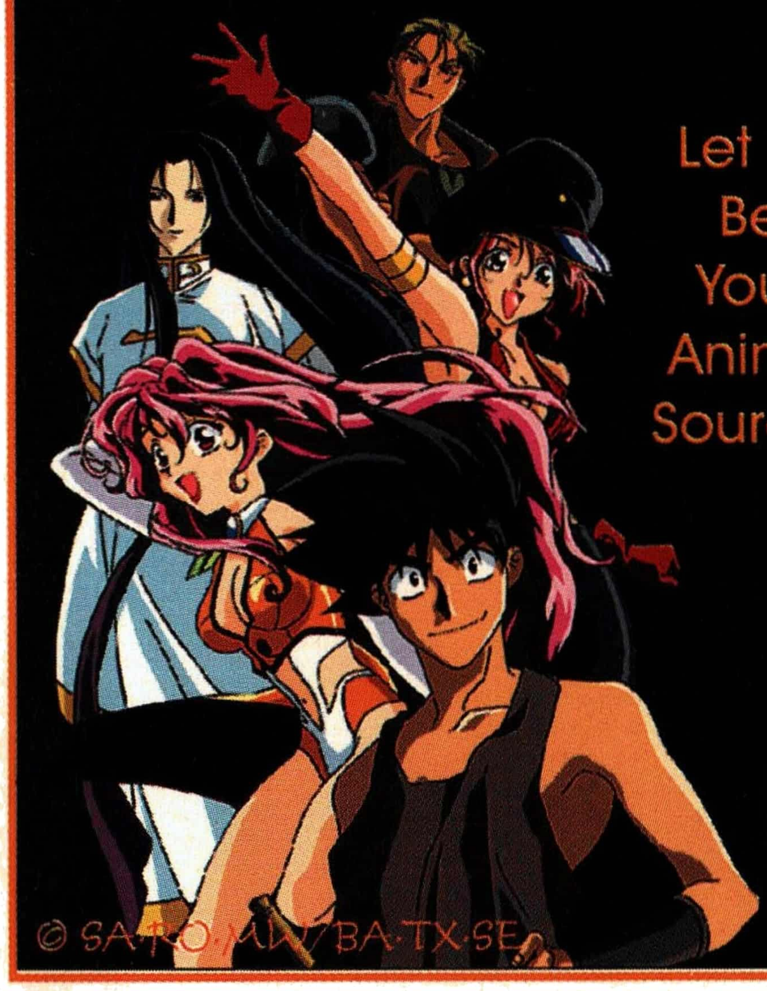

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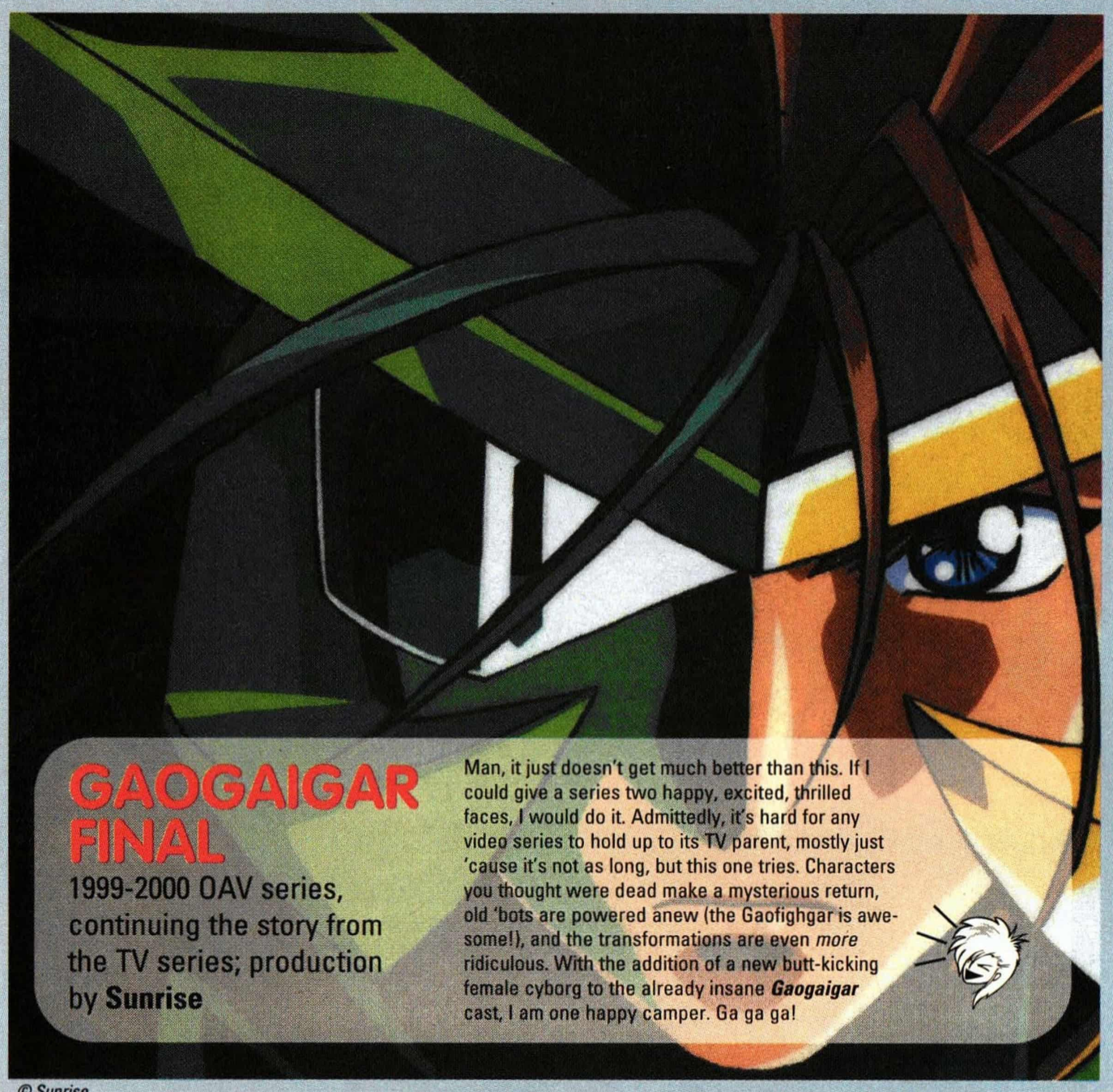


GAOGAIGAR FINAL

1999-2000 OAV series, continuing the story from the TV series; production by **Sunrise**

Man, it just doesn't get much better than this. If I could give a series two happy, excited, thrilled faces, I would do it. Admittedly, it's hard for any video series to hold up to its TV parent, mostly just 'cause it's not as long, but this one tries. Characters you thought were dead make a mysterious return, old 'bots are powered anew (the Gaofighgar is awesome!), and the transformations are even *more* ridiculous. With the addition of a new butt-kicking female cyborg to the already insane ***Gaogaigar*** cast, I am one happy camper. Ga ga ga!

© Sunrise

RIO: Wow! ***Gaogaigar Final*** was awesome! I totally dig that pink-headed girl! I hate to gush but I haven't seen many *yûsha* (brave) shows and all this came as a shock to me. Not since ***Giant Robo*** have I seen an OAV with such over-the-top action. The new and redesigned "Gaofighgar" is grandly ridiculous and it's accompanied by the most humorously drawn-out transformation sequence of all time. ***Gaogaigar Final*** doesn't touch the arty and theological concepts of many recent robot series—its strength is intense action and plenty of it. Anime silliness at its best.

RIO

TRISH: He's a regular Ron Popeil "Pocket Tool Kit," this Gaogaigar is. Screwdriver, hammer.... I have no particular dislike for the characters, but neither do any of them really catch my eye. This may just be a case of having to come up with an opinion on a video which, no matter how good it might be otherwise, has to rely heavily on material that's gone before—kind of like the new ***Dune*** mini-series on the Sci-Fi Channel. Wish I could offer a better-informed opinion on this one, but there you go.

TRISH

URIAN: Let's just say I watched it, borrowed it, showed it to all my friends, and couldn't stop singing the damn theme song for two days! This show makes me hyperactive and by the time I'm done watching it I'm bouncing off the walls driving all the good (mostly good) people at Viz Comm. nuts! Add to that the 4 cups of coffee and 3 cans of Surge and I am my own talk show. Robots done right. Bigger than huge and armed with devices that defy all know philosophies regarding Newtonian Physics. This show rules!

WINNIE: Hey, after watching something like ***Super Milk-chan***, just about anything would look good, wouldn't it? After ***Super Milk-chan***, watching ***Gaogaigar Final*** was like waking up and realizing that your flu was gone. The character designs deserve some originality/style points (although there were times when they didn't deserve points). Personally, I liked the pink-haired cyborg with the cooling jacket who was always armed and ready to fight. She pulls gigantic guns out of nowhere! I love it! Of course, there's nothing like watching humongous robots go through insane transformation sequences and fight city-demolishing battles. And don't forget to watch the live performance of the opening song; it's wholesome entertainment for all.

URIAN

INU-YASHA

2000 TV series; based on the manga by **Rumiko Takahashi** (***Ranma 1/2***); directed by **Masashi Ikeda** (***Gundam Wing, Ronin Warriors***)

Okay, good, it didn't suck. It's hard to tell just from the opening couple of eps—any TV series takes a while to get going—but so far, this looks like it's above par for animation based on aTakahashi title (well, except for ***Mermaid's Scar***—that was really pretty plush). Sunrise studio is the action king, after all, so I'm looking forward to more demon-slaying fun in future installments. The centipede woman was darn cool, Inu-Yasha looks to be shaping up to be dangerously sexy, and Kagome's the spunky sort that's not likely to be a doormat. Excellent!

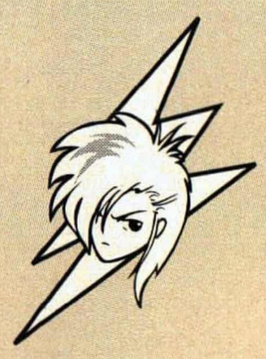
© Rumiko Takahashi/Shogakukan • Dokubai • Sunrise 2000

RIO: Confession: I haven't read as much of the ***Inu-Yasha*** manga as I should have. If this awesome TV series is any indicator of what I've been missing, I should kick myself. The first episode is decked out with plenty of high budget visuals *and* involving characters. Kagome doesn't wuss out like a lot of anime heroines of late and I'm glad to see she doesn't take a lot of lip from Inu-Yasha either. There's a real energy to this show and I got a good old-fashioned thrill from watching it. I can't wait to see more.

WINNIE

TRISH: "Better than I thought" is what someone in the office said, but, then again, I'm not sure what it was they were expecting. Fond as I am of expressions such as "the animation quality was predictably high," the truth is that, of late, so much animation quality has *not* been high—been downright *lousy*, in fact. Here, though, not only do we get the animation, but we also get the consistently charming Kappei Yamaguchi (yaay!) Go figure the irony; having had to do well over 100 ***Ranma*** episodes in English, you'd think I'd be sick of him, yet still do his "*baka*"'s ring fresh on my experienced ear.

URIAN: I'm not a fan of the manga, to tell the truth, and I didn't have much hope for liking the anime when I sat down to watch it, but the show was far better than I expected and the animation was sleek and smooth. The creatures are the star of the show, as far as I'm concerned—Takahashi has always had a distinctive style when it comes to her monster designs and this is perhaps her best yet. The first centipede-woman looked creepy in the manga but when she's animated she makes my skin crawl. I hope the rest of the series holds up to this excellent beginning.



Mai

WINNIE Being a big ***Inu-Yasha*** fan, I'm happy to say that the anime version is awesome. ***Inu-Yasha*** has crisp animation, great voices, and it more or less follows the original manga (as far as the first episode is concerned, anyway). The special effects are well done (I love that pulsating effect given off by everyone's favorite dog demon when he's pinned to the tree). Plus, now we'll see all the characters animated, including my personal favorite, Miroku. Come on, who doesn't love an attractive monk with an air rip in his hand?

NEXT:

Looking back at his highlights from the year 2000: hanging out with Rumiko Takahashi, a brief stint as a male model, and meeting El Vez (the Mexican Elvis)—nothing beats the wild time Contributing Editor **Rio Yañez** had at Julie Davis' Halloween party. Rio's Mexican wrestling mask was no match for the costume worn by Jason "Real Meat" Thompson, a mask and glove made out of actual meat slices and beef tongues. "Don't try this at home" Rio says.

Blissfully grateful for the unbelievably good fortune that allowed *ANIMERICA* Founding Editor **T. Ledoux** to attend a recent sold-out staging of Zeffirelli's ***Bohème*** at The Met, still she is only a few hours off the plane from the East Coast and, as such, is just about done in with exhaustion . (Drinking right up to when her plane left and getting no sleep is probably part of it, too.) Maybe this is why, when it came time to sit down and review ***Gaogaigar***, she.... Zzz....

Urian "Dr." Brown has been spending his days chatting with the incredibly inane people in Napster rap chat room and has more fun cussing up a storm quoting Rudy Ray Moore, Ice Berg Slim, and a various rappers with potty mouths. He says, "it's a nonstop laugh fest at (n)Rapster when white kids from the suburbs try to act ghetto." He is also trying to get Viz to publish some dang good Korean manga but so far, no way. He's not giving up yet!

ANIMERICA contributing writer **Winnie Chow** would like to use this space to give some much-deserved props to Jon Hutchins (a.k.a. HyperBroken) for wowing the crowd with an incredible 540 kick at the November 2000 Airtight Garage ***DDR*** Tournament. If she remembers correctly, her comment was, "That was the coolest thing I've ever seen in my life!" (And yes, Winnie has attempted a 540 herself, but she won't go into that here.)

Mai Anime™, simply surly ward of Major Anime™, is beyond exhausted with the holidays' overcommercialization. Sheesh, how many ties can you buy for one person anyway? Not that the Major *wears* ties anyway....

STRANGE DAWN • PSYCHIC FORCE • VANDREAD • GATEKEEPERS

RIO: I'm still not sure what ***Oh! Super Milk-chan*** means just yet. My mind was fully blown just about the time the Klan shows up to slice the President's head off with a guillotine or was it when the robot started farting; maybe it's when ***Milk-chan*** whips out her pistol and starts firing. ***Oh! Super Milk-chan*** is like a psychadelic Junko Mizuno vision of ***PeeWee's Playhouse***. It's bold, exciting, and like nothing I've ever seen in my life—my mind was so boggled that I haven't formed an opinion on it just yet. Just watch it and ponder.

TRISH: Just like my beloved ***Bono-Bono***, this one had me blowing snot bubbles with laughter, but, also like ***Bono-Bono***, I'm guessing not everyone will like it as much as I. In the first half alone, there were nods to ***Obake no Q-Tarô*** (?), ***Crayon Shin-chan***, ***Rose of Versailles***, ***Tensai Bakabon***... and those were just the few I caught. Trying to explain the humor here may be like translating ***South Park*** to a non English-speaking foreigner: You can *try*, but by no means will you get *all*. (I know *I* thought the David Hasselhoff nose-job episode was funny...how 'bout you?) Major, major points for "Pastel Shin-*san*"—I nearly choked.

URIAN: On a crazy train headed for Nutsville to have my mind scrambled by an episode of ***Milk-chan***. It's like ***Ren and Stimpy*** but annoying and far stranger. I'm sure this show would appeal to me if I was smoking a shrunken head covered in creamy butter—this is way beyond weird. It's also severely annoying, as the constant dreary-sounding voices of the slow-speaking whiny girl who stars in it and her even slower-speaking sidekick talk for days. I couldn't take it for long and wanted to run out of the room screaming and after nearly 47 minutes of being tortured, that's what I eventually did.

WINNIE Take the little girl in an oversized red sweater who does nothing but wave her arms. Take the pig/monkey-like man known as "President" who sits around swatting flies. Multiply them into a feature that's at least two hours. That's how you make what is known as "really crappy anime." If you've seen two minutes of this, you've pretty much seen the whole thing. So why bother in the first place? Go out. Go do something. Learn Tae Kwon Do. Cook a meal. Watch a movie. Build upper-body strength. Write a friggin' book. Just don't do anything that would encourage a ***Super Milk-chan 2***.

OH! SUPER MILK-CHAN

2000 TV series; original concept, direction, and design by **Tanaka Hideyuki**

What the heck what that all about? If this doesn't remind you of ***Ren and Stimpy***, you've led a sheltered life, but then again, you may be better off not having seen the dentist episode. My guess is we're looking at a sort of anime ***South Park*** here—characters talking on the phone all day, a living bong, strange things appearing and disappearing from the President's desk (including some recognizable robot toys), odd things happening out the window...I'd bust a gut if it made sense to me, but as it is, the darn thing's just plain *weird*. I've gotta give it a thumbs-up just on *principle*. Stuff this strange deserves *something*.

© 2000 framegraphics/SUPLEX • SEP

RIO: I loved every second of ***Maetel Legend***, although the continuities of Leiji Matsumoto animations are becoming ever more confusing to me. Even though this OAV is supposed to chronicle the younger adventures of sisters Emeraldas and Maetel it is just as dark (if not darker) than their later adventures. The story, about an evil alchoholic android that looks like Megatron, is another great Matsumoto fairy tale. Maetel still seems very mysterious in this one and Emeraldas is such an unruly butt-kicker in the most entertaining way. They're not the Olsen twins, that's for damn sure.

TRISH: Damned if Matsumoto hasn't pulled it off. For years he's been saying he's going to join his various universes together; with this, he's taken a huge step. What I like best, aside from how beautifully the different plotlines have been synthesized, is the animation. It's so '70s...yet it's not. The *feel* is contemporary, but the *look* is pure ***Ginga Tetsudô***. Amazing. For me, knowing how inevitable is the coming tragedy only makes it better. When Matsumoto came on at the end in the "bonus" interview and looked directly into the camera as he spoke, I wept for pure joy. *This* is what it's all been for.

URIAN: Rats chewing on corpses turn their heads and look at the screen, opening their blood-stained, red mouths. Shrieking in disgust sets the mood for this somber anime. The story of Maetel is a complex one filled with solitude and sorrow, dotted with fleeting moments of sincere joy, or at least it seems that way to me. This is a particularly interesting anime because it shows us what Maetel's mother Promethea was like before she completely lost her soul and became what she is when we meet her in the ***Galaxy Express*** movies. Queen Emeraldas joins in this dreamy surreal story that reveals some of both sisters' mysterious past. Interesting to fans of Matsumoto.

WINNIE: I remember being really drowsy when I saw this (gee, thanks, high school!), but I managed to follow the most of the plot of ***Maetel Legend***. At least I think I did. It has that old, slightly dingy look to it, but the tale of a young Emeraldas and Maetel turns out to be an interesting one, from the lady with the red hole problem to the strange chef. I'm not really a ***GE 999*** fan, so I don't know as much about the characters or their motives. I got most of the story, but I was clueless when it came down to knowing why all the people were shooting at each other.

MAETEL LEGEND

2000 OAV series; based on characters created by **Leiji Matsumoto** (***Star Blazers***, ***Galaxy Express 999***); direction by **Kazuyoshi Yokota**

So sue me, I love this old-school stuff. Only in this case, it's not so old-school—the animation looks really good (certainly Emeraldas has never looked better, even in her own video series), the music is classic big-orchestra, and there's no cheesy computer graphics that I could spot. I had a little problem with the fact that Maetel was such a sissy—kidnapped and thrown over someone's shoulder twice in the same episode!—but at least Emeraldas made up for it by being generally awesome. And I dig the crossover stuff!

© Leiji Matsumoto/Marutani Creative/Art Collection House/Avex

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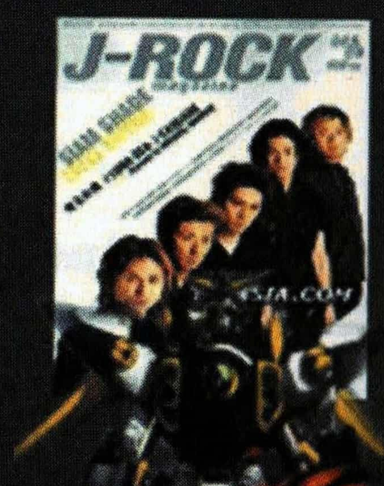

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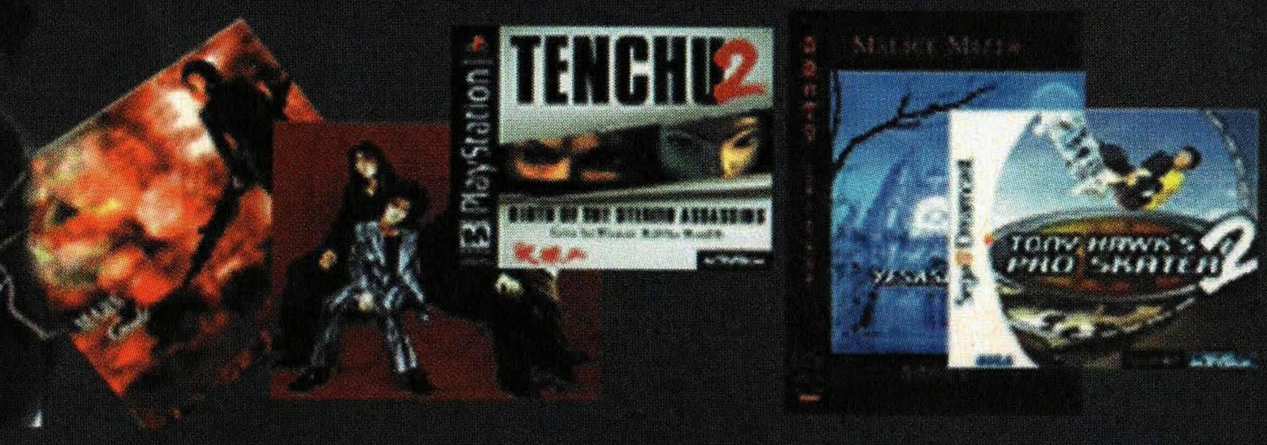

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ANIMERICA GAFFE SQUAD

Please note these changes to the following issues:

Vol. 8, No. 10: The No. 5 entry for Japan's Bestselling Manga should be ***Kaguya Hime*** ("Princess Kaguya"), not ***Kôya Hime*** (Anime Radar).

Vol. 8, No. 11: The author of ***Lolita*** is *Vladimir* Nabakov, not Anton (Animessages).

Those readers who wrote in with corrections, thanks for your help!

ANSWERS, BUT STILL MORE QUESTIONS

Hi, my name is Leah, and I love your magazine. I want to say how great it is that you are out there. I have been an anime and manga fan since I can remember, and so to have the chance to learn more through your magazine is great! Anyway, I just finished reading the spotlight on ***Gundam Wing Endless Waltz*** in Vol. 8, No. 10, and you said that it answered a lot of questions about the series and I totally agree with that, but at the same time, it gave me even more questions. I mean, I am an extremely curious person by nature, and so after watching ***Endless Waltz*** and reading your article I am still left with the questions of "Who is the 'nameless soldier' if he isn't really Trowa Barton?" and "How come no one ever noticed that the real Trowa was dead?" I know that in the world of anime almost anything is possible—I mean, I have seen ***Digimon*** and ***Cardcaptors***, but still, if you create something to, in a sense, answer all the questions left after ***Gundam Wing***, how can you give the public more questions to ask? I am a major fan of ***Gundam Wing***, and I intend to go look for your special issue because I am obviously interested, to come up with these questions, but I can't be the only one who is wondering these things. Like I said, I love your magazine, and I hope that you keep up the good—scratch that—*great* work.
—Leah T., Whippany, NJ

To some questions, there are no answers. That's why people write fanfics. Seriously, though—you'll never hear us promise to answer ALL your questions in any one issue, not even an ANIMERICA SPECIAL. *For one thing, there's simply not enough space—for a show like* ***Gundam Wing****, which has so much background detail, we'd need to write a book, not a magazine. Also, we do like to leave you a reason to watch the animation itself, so you have a reason to ask these kinds of questions!*

There have been several comic series about ***Gundam Wing****, many of which try to come up with answers for mysteries like these. You might want to check out* ***Gundam Wing Ground Zero****, or the upcoming* ***Gundam Wing Blind Target*** *and* ***Gundam Wing Episode Zero****, from Viz Comics, or* ***Gundam Wing Battlefield of Pacifist****, from TokyoPop.com.*

WHAT ARE HEERO AND DUO DOING!?

I have a few questions to ask you about ***Gundam Wing***. First, I went to the Internet the other day and I saw some perverted pictures of ***Gundam Wing***'s Heero and Duo "together" or "being too friendly with each other." What in the world is that all about? Are the artists who drew those pictures sick? Is Heero and Duo's relationship physical, or "in love" or something? Is it foreshadowing the series? What's the truth behind all of this? On a lighter note, since according to ***Time*** magazine Sailor Moon and the inner Sailor Soldiers are the "Spice Girls of anime," does that mean that ***Gundam Wing***'s Heero and the other G-Boys are the "Backstreet Boys of anime"?
—Sandra

The above note about fanfics kind of applies here too—in essence, the story of ***Gundam Wing****, and everything that's "officially" known about the characters, is pretty much what appears in the animation. More than that, you have to use your own imagination...and fans tend to do just that by writing fanfiction and creating fan art or manga.*

By the way, just so you have a historical perspective to put this in, ever since anime fandom first began in Japan, it's been a sort of tradition to speculate about what characters might be involved with each other—it's nothing less than a cornerstone of the sort of material you're likely to find in dôjinshi, *or Japanese fanzines, which often have a very strong erotic subtext. A case in point—if you see* ***Gundam Wing*** dôjinshi *in Japan, it's likely to be filed according to the author's choice of pairing (i.e., Heero x Duo, Zechs x Treize...you get the idea).*

*Do we think the G-Boys are the Backstreet Boys of anime? If only they would sing...no wait, there IS a Japanese soundtrack where the voice-actors sing in character (****Gundam Wing Operation 4****). It's looking pretty feasible....*

SERIOUS ABOUT SOL BIANCA

Sol Bianca sounds like everything I want in anime and more (*ANIMERICA* Vol. 8, No. 10). If ***Sol Bianca*** was directed by Katsuhito Akiyama, then it has to be good. I always enjoyed his work on ***Bubblegum Crisis***. With five beautiful women in a sci-fi setting and it has to do with space piracy, then this baby has "hit" written all over it! I am now enthusiastic in seeing ***Sol Bianca: The Legacy***, the six-part series. Now, where is my popcorn?
—Andres Somprise Soyo, 13440 North 44th Street, #1186, Phoenix, Arizona 85032; PRoberts@csd.ca.gov

Hey, we just tell you about the anime. You've got to come up with your own popcorn.

NOT JUST FOR GIRLS ONLY!

I guess my fascination for ***Sailor Moon*** was responsible for this particular mindset I currently have, but ever since I began watching anime, I've been drawn entirely toward series starring female characters. Serena and her gal pals led to my getting interested in Kei and Yuri from ***Dirty Pair***, ***Video Girl Ai*** (the best anime love story, bar none!); the soap opera exploits of Miaka and Yui from ***Fushigi Yûgi***; the heroic adventures of Hikaru, Umi and Fuu from ***Magic Knight Rayearth***; the madcap alien women of ***Tenchi Muyô!***; and the way-cool ***Revolutionary Girl Utena***; to little-known classics like ***Oh My Goddess!*** (Urd reminds me of a high-maintenance girlfriend I once had!); ***Devil Hunter Yohko***; and ***Cutey Honey***. Heck, even mecha-mad ***Gundam Wing*** has plenty of strong and fascinating women. From courageous, peace-loving Relena; creepy Colonel/Lady Une; creepier, war-crazed Dorothy Catalonia (those eyebrows of hers freak me out!); kind-hearted Catherine Bloom; soldier-girl Lucrezia Noin; to freedom-fighting Sally Po—these women have substance and depth to spare and can easily stand on their own with Heero and the boys. Just because I'm male and approaching middle age doesn't mean I can't fully appreciate series geared toward girls. In some ways, the shows I've mentioned above are far more interesting and dramatic than many male-oriented series, with stories that pull you in and keep you coming back for more.

This is just my opinion, mind you, but for males to limit themselves to ***Dragon Ball Z*** and other series that overemphasize robots, battlesuits, and endless slugfests while ignoring the likes of ***SM, Rayearth, FY*** and ***Utena*** among others, just because females are the protagonists, would be to miss out on perhaps some of the best-crafted anime being produced today. The bottom line here is that good anime is good anime, regardless of whether the stars of the show wear skirts.
—Jeff Branch; treetop@voicenet.com

ANIME & MANGA MONTHLY
ANIMERICA ENVELOPE ART

Christine Kwan • Northbrook, IL • Age 17

Nicole Daughenbaugh • Harleysville, PA • Age 13

Amanda Inmon • Athens, TX

WAKARIMASU NE!

Konnichiwa! I recently received your Vol. 8, No. 10, and read the letter "*Nihongo wa Hanashimasu ka*?". I think that would be a great idea! A new language may take a lot of time and dedication, but if you (*ANIMERICA*) would publish a few grammatical tips, phrases, words, etc., in each issue, it would greatly help those already trying to learn Japanese. I know from experience that learning languages takes a lot of time. I have been teaching myself with the help of the Internet, books, audio tapes, etc., to write and speak Japanese. Just a few phrases can add up and increase a person's vocabulary. This is how people can learn a new language, by learning a few words at a time, learning to recognize characters, and so on. It takes patience to learn a foreign language; just a few words, once memorized, are the best way to learn. I hope you will consider this and *PLEASE* publish this letter, along with my e-mail address so I can hear from other Japan enthusiasts.

—Chris@anime-genesis.com

WHY NOT A JAPANESE SECTION?

Why not create a mini-section devoted to learning Japanese? Nothing heavy, but perhaps a general outline of the grammar and the characters, and a few words and phrases. Plus, like the mascot for the Review section, Major Anime™, you could have a little cute mascot "helping" us along. I've always wanted to learn a little Japanese but did not want to get too deep into it. That way your mag would be entertaining and educational (not that it already isn't)! Keep your mag going because I know a lot of *otaku* as friends! Wonderful job!

Have you ever interviewed Ian Corlett? I loved him as Goku (***Dragon Ball Z***), Bob (***Reboot***), and Cheetor (***Beast Wars***)! If you haven't, please consider it. And you may print my e-mail address. Could you post my e-mail online? I don't get your mag that often (boo-hoo!).

—Ms Goku 15; ronald.henderson6@gte.net

No, we haven't interviewed Ian Corlett yet, but we'll see what we can do. And there seems to be support for the idea of a Japanese-language-learning section. We'll keep puzzling over our ideas for the best format. Stay tuned!

THE DEATH OF ESCAFLOWNE

A few weeks have gone by since the tragic news concerning ***The Vision of Escaflowne*** was made public. According to Fox Kids, ***Escaflowne*** will no longer be shown on the network, and there have been rumors that their entire line of anime programming may be dropped.

To an anime fan and founder of an anime club, this is very disheartening. How could one of our staple shows, the one anime that keeps anime fans emphatic about the genre, be summarily dismissed without a whimper?

The problem, I believe, is that too many people disliked Fox's version of ***Escaflowne***. For old fans of the show, the voice-actors were just too hard to stomach. We all loved the sinister voices of Dilandau, Folken, and Dornkirk. They contrasted so well with the angelic voices of Hitomi, Van, and Allen. But, for some reason, the English voices did not translate those contradictions well enough.

This was just one symptom of the overall problem. The bottom line is that our anime does not translate into their anime. What I mean is that for an anime show to appear on network TV, it must answer to the FCC. As long as the FCC prohibits and demands cuts of our anime, I believe that anime fandom will not support network televised anime. If anime fandom will not support network versions of anime, then we are destined to remain merely a fad.

What is so disheartening is that ***Escaflowne*** was to be the flagship, the wormhole to zoom new fans into anime. ***Escaflowne*** is not overly violent, sexual, or silly. In fact, ***Escaflowne*** is everything that a cartoon is not. It has a plot, subplots, intrigue, mystery, and it is visually stimulating. As far as I was concerned, this was anime's best chance to go mainstream.

For some of you, the thought of going mainstream is not a happy thought, and I am not advocating that we go ***Pokémon*** for every anime on the block. What I am concerned about is the viablility of our hobby, our love, our passion. Without the new fans, anime may one day collapse. What studio is willing to continue to make shows that no one is willing to watch? Many anime fans would like to keep anime a secret society, however, it does not pay the bills.

I understand that there are those who refuse to watch a dubbed anime; I understand that there are those who are purists. We have that luxury now. Right now we have the best selection of anime in our country, ever. How did we get that supply? With the success of anime on TV. If we want it to continue, we must support anime in all its forms.

—Jason Ebner, Founder, The RECCA Society

*OTAKU S*HOULD KNOW BETTER

I have a small rant in response to the various negative responses that ***Pokémon*** has gotten from both ***Digimon***-haters and ***Pokémon***-haters alike. I'm sick of hearing that Pikachu sucks ("***Pokémon*** is corny, but ***Digimon*** is cornier"), and other various insults that I got from Otakon fans. People, why must we do exactly what *otaku* stand against?! I know that many of us get criticized and insulted for our love of anime. But can't we learn to accept what our fellow fans believe? Can't we just assume that everyone who is a fellow *otaku* knows what they're doing and will be respectful of us too? I am extremely proud to shout it out to the world: I'M A ***POKÉMON*** FAN AND AN ***EVANGELION*** FAN AT THE SAME TIME!!!! AAAAAAAHHHHHH!!

What I mean to say is that I am 14 and I have, in my opinion, a very mature mindset on things, and I love ***Pokémon, Sailor Moon, Slayers, Nadesico, Evangelion, Outlaw Star, Cowboy Bebop, Ranma 1/2, Dirty Pair Flash***, and ***Princess Mononoke***. I read the manga ***Parasyte***. Although most of the anime I buy suggests ages 13 and up, I know that many people in my grade make fun of me for liking anime as a whole. So I return to my previous point: I firmly believe that we as *otaku* must take a stand against disrespect for interest in anime from non-*otaku* as well as disrespect and hissing at ***Pokémon*** fans within the fandom. (Personally, I warmed up to the ***Pokémon*** characters and I have more loyalty for ***Pokémon***, yet I do respect ***Digimon*** for being an anime and a very deep one at that.)

I dressed as Ash/Satoshi for Otakon 2000, and I heard a lot of rude and bratty comments coming from the people around me. OMIGOD!, I thought to myself, as I just realized THAT THE PEOPLE MAKIN' FUN OF ME WERE *OTAKU* TOO! I did get a lot of compliments and I seriously loved hanging out with people, but it hurt me and pissed me off to hear "***Pokémon*** sucks!" coming from the grown man wearing an ***Eva*** T-shirt right next to me. I think that ***Pokémon*** has a lot of character development, especially with Ash and Misty. Pikachu is cute and smart, in my opinion. I think that the guy was just judging from what he saw on the outside. Pikachu should not be the only thing people hate when they want to bash ***Pokémon***.

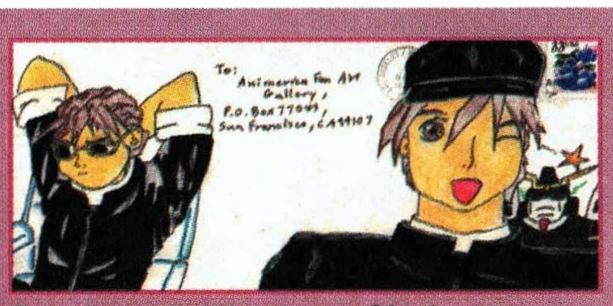
And to Mr. Yañez, I really appreciated your intelligent review on ***Maze*** (*ANIMERICA* Vol. 8, No. 10). I bought this, expecting to see the version that I viewed at Otakon 1999. Instead, parts of the show completely shocked and disgusted me. I could have done okay with the hot-springs part, but the rape scene was definitely disgusting and offensive to me too. I totally agree with you, Mr. Yañez, and thank you for making it a point to warn the would-be buyers! I would get into my rant about why I hope more multiracial characters would get into anime, but I wouldn't have a chance of getting my letter published if I made it any longer. Next letter, I promise I will! Good luck with your magazine. You all rock!

—Sarah Myer; Satoshi.chan@pallet-town.com

Y'know, we've always wondered why it is that fans, who often have to deal with prejudice from their friends and schoolmates about their anime hobby, are often so eager to inflict the same kind of mocking and bullying attitudes on other fans about the shows they like. Does liking a show make you cool? Does a dislike of a show make you morally superior to someone who likes it? Of course it doesn't—that's called "taste," and everyone has their own likes and dislikes. The short answer would be that any given group contains its own proportion of absolute jerks.

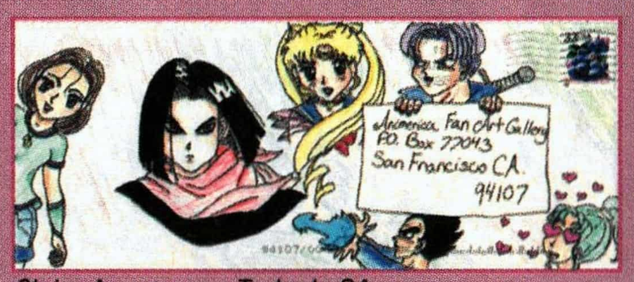
Rio Yañez sez, "I have no love for anime snobs; no one has the right to make you feel bad about the anime you like, and that's the bottom line." ☆

Stone Cold Steve Austin appears courtesy of the *SHÔNEN SUNDAY* series *Dynama Itô* by Pero Sugimoto



Brian Persaud • Westchester, CA • Age 11

Nikki Robinson • Pryor, OK • Age 13



Claire Armstrong • Turlock, CA

ANIMERICA CONTEST

We give away free swag every month in a drawing from all readers who sent in their readers' response cards (those inserts in the front of the mag). If *you* wanna win too, you've gotta send in your card to enter the drawing for videos, comics, all sorts of cool stuff!

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN WIN THIS MONTH

One of three complete sets of ***No Need for Tenchi!*** (***Tenchi Muyô!***) graphic novels (Vols. 1-8) from **Viz Comics**

HOW TO ENTER

Just pull out the card from the front of the magazine, fill it out, fold it over, tape it shut, stick a stamp on it, and send it to us! You don't have to subscribe or anything—you're automatically entered to win!

CONTEST DEADLINE

25 January 2001

RULES

No purchase necessary. Employees of Mad Catz, Nintendo, Viz Communications, Inc., and those associated with ANIMERICA magazine are ineligible to enter. Winners' names will be announced in the magazine. All prizes will be sent out following the winners' notification. Viz Communications is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Winners will be selected by random drawing by the staff of ANIMERICA. Good luck!

THIS MONTH'S WINNERS

Here are the winners from our contest in Vol. 8, No. 10!

MOKONA PLUSH DOLL
Worlynn Ow • Chicago, IL
Rachel Aseltine • Bakersfield, CA
Jane Moore • Haleiwa, HI

GASARAKI VIDEO
Rose Dehoff • Army, GA
Kristy Bailey • Hailey, ID
Abby Lundgren • Wauconda, IL
Karissa Clayton • Panama City, FL
Alex Hellsund • Diamond Bar, CA
Tim Bither • Roanoke, VA

GASARAKI DVD
Mike Rossmassler • Los Gatos, CA
Helen Hung • Gladwid, MI
Tim Colley • Council, VA

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM 0079 GRAPHIC NOVEL
Floretta Hamilton • Detroit, MI
Aaron Brown • Batavia, NY
Jessica Gimarelli • Foster City, CA
Erin Freeman • Albuquerque, NM

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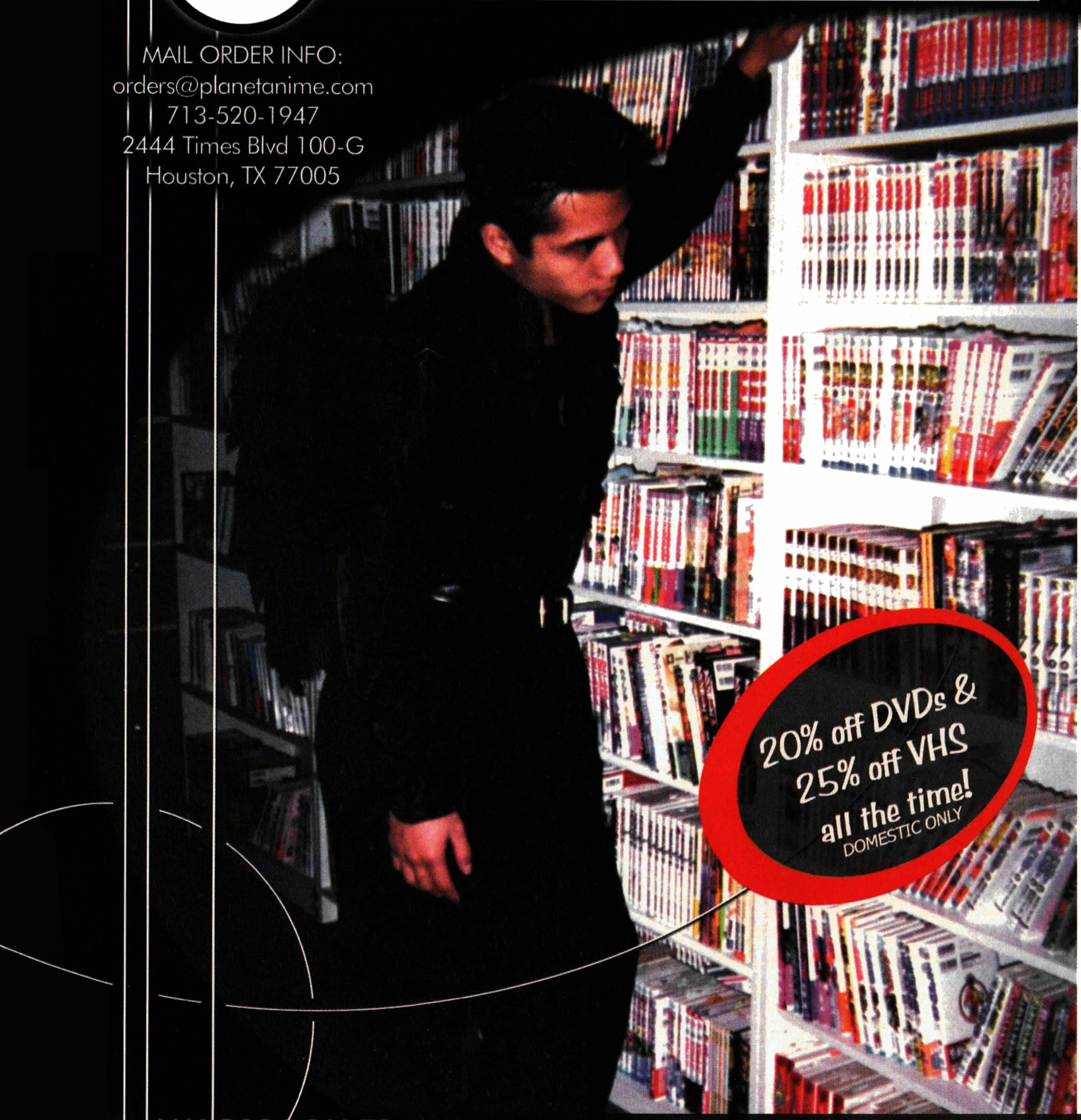

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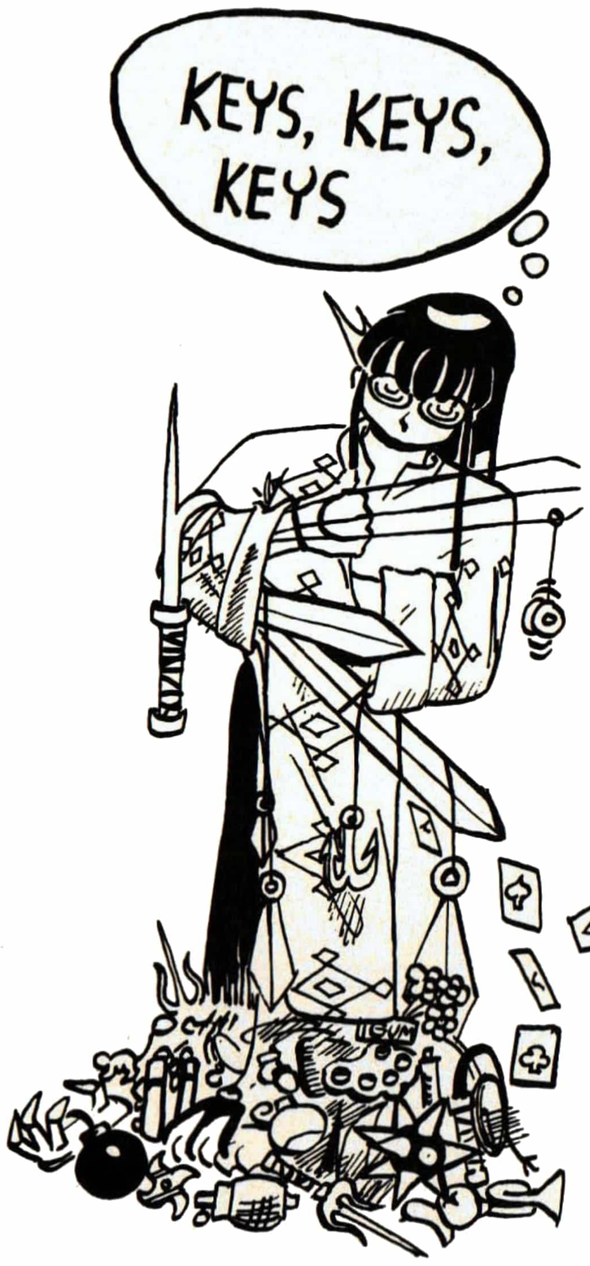
Anything Goes!

Laura Beth • Maryville, TN • Age 17

Amanda Boyd • St. Charles, MO • Age 16

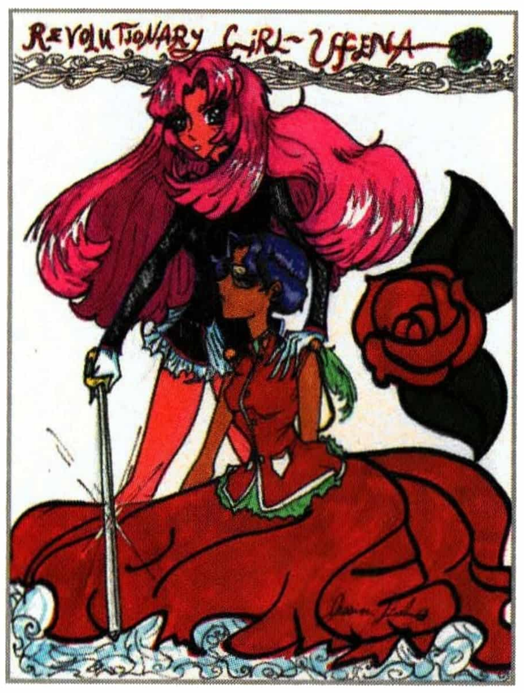
Todd Uriah Chandler • Chattanooga, TN • Age 22

Meagan Lita Falger • Mesquite, TX • Age 15

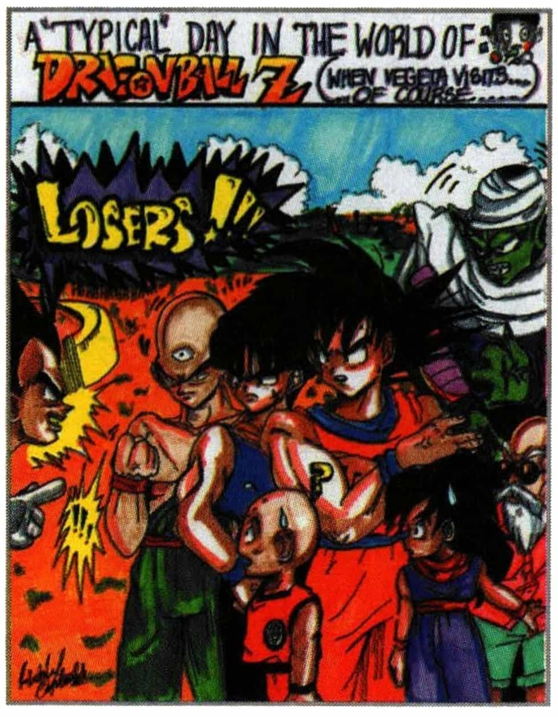


Melanie Tregonning • W. Australia • Age 16

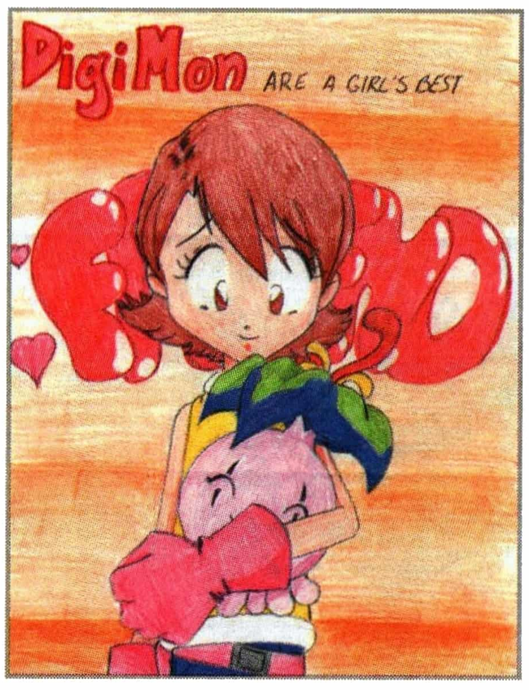
Tien Nguyen • Stockton, CA • Age 15



Jessica Fink • Sayville, NY • Age 17



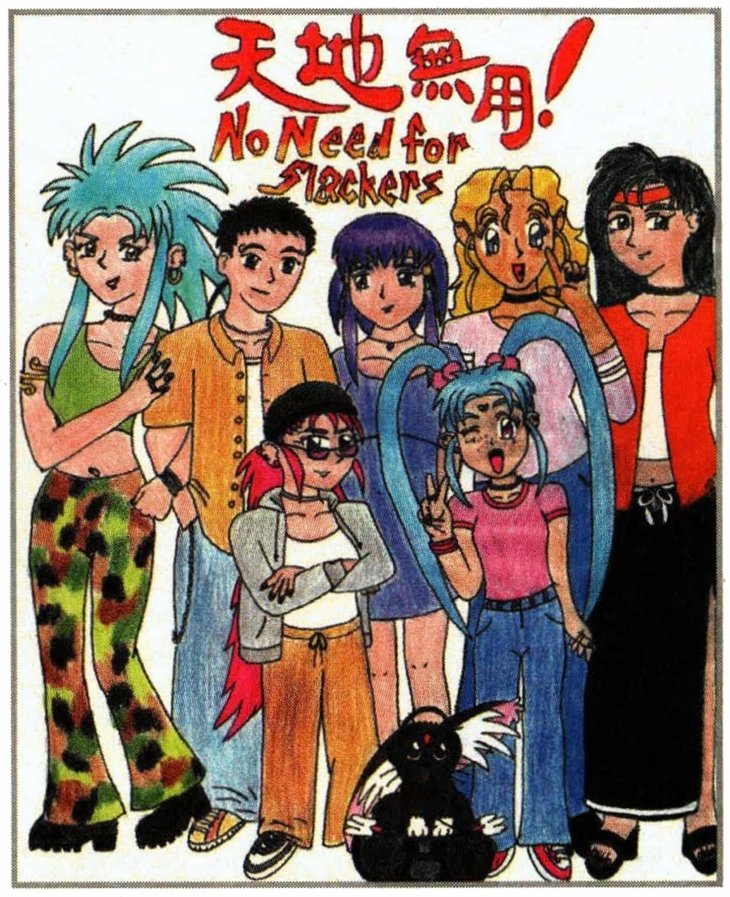
Rebekah L.. Copeland • Pemberton, NJ • Age 24



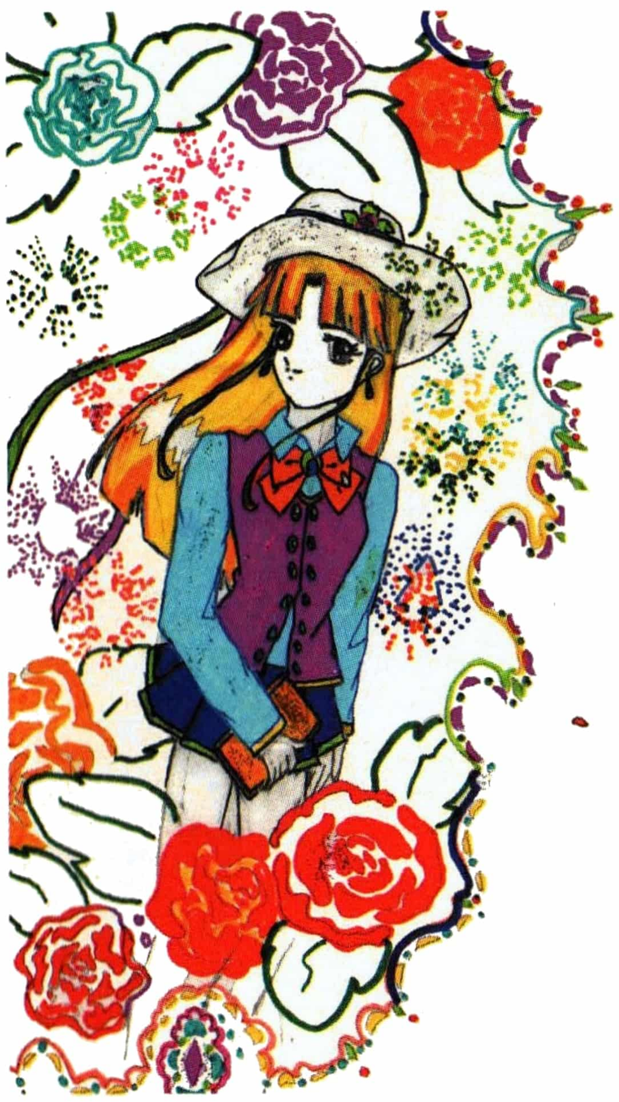
Erin Thweatt • Petersburg, VA • Age 16

FAN ART GALLERY

Izanami "Iza" McCormick-Mariano • San Francisco, CA • Age ?

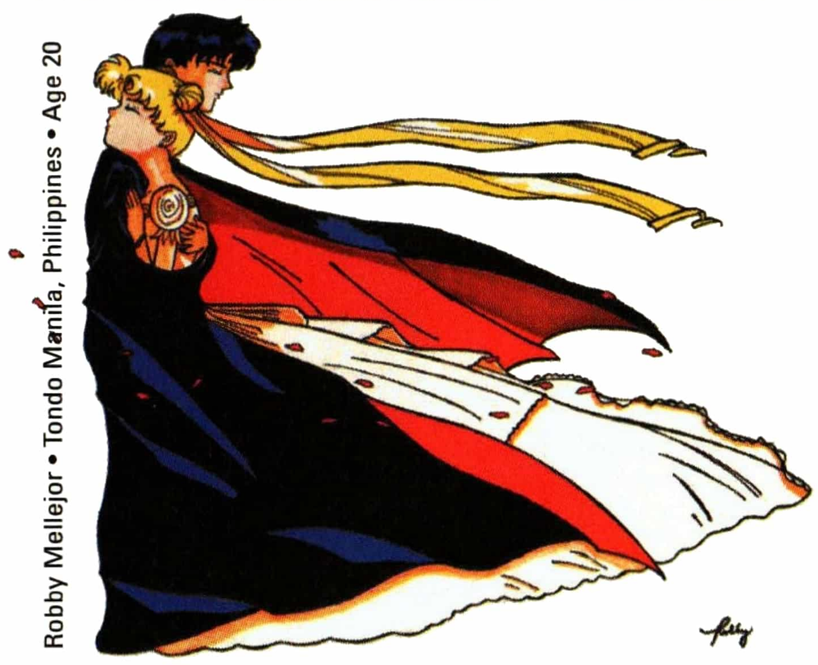


Heather McNully • Arlington, TX • Age 16



Tuyet Luong • Tempe, AZ • Age 14

Sara Dang • N. Dartmouth, MA • Age 14



Robby Mellejor • Tondo Manila, Philippines • Age 20

Rob Tilley • Chesapeake, VA • Age 22

Steven Roberts • Wattsburg, PA • Age 29

WANNA DRAW YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTERS?

ANIMERICA Fan Art Gallery, P.O. Box 77043, San Francisco, CA 94107
We love it! Each month, the Fan Art Gallery prints a sampling of reader artwork for your enjoyment. Submissions to the Fan Art Gallery may be printed in the magazine, posted to our web site (**www.animerica-mag.com**), shown at an anime convention, or all of the above at some future date. But if your drawing wasn't printed this month, don't worry! We save every illustration, so your artwork may yet be published in the future.

Details: Make your artwork **no larger than** 8 1/2" x 11".) No e-mail entries. Please send your illustrations by postal mail. Color illustrations are preferred to black-and-white. Artwork will not be returned. If you don't want to send your originals, color copies work just fine! **Clearly label each piece** of your artwork **on the back** with your **name**, **address**, **age**, and the name of the character you're illustrating.

NEXT THEME: Rap Music

This theme will appear in **Vol. 9, No. 4**.
Theme deadline: **25 February**.

Angela Juarez • Glendale, CA • Age 15

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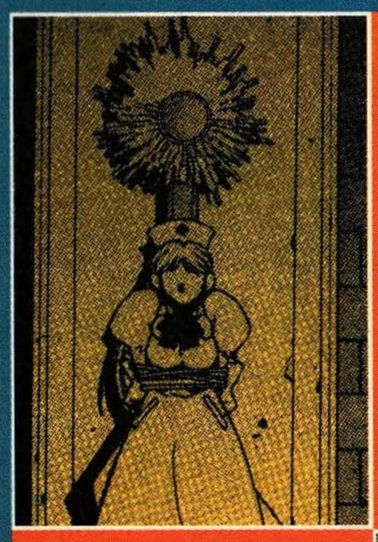


Steam Detectives

By Kia Asamiya

With bombs scattered throughout the metropolis, time is running out for Steam City. And why is Ling Ling is acting so strange?

Marionette Generation

By Haruhiko Mikimoto

Discover some clues about Lunch's special powers!

Fushigi Yûgi

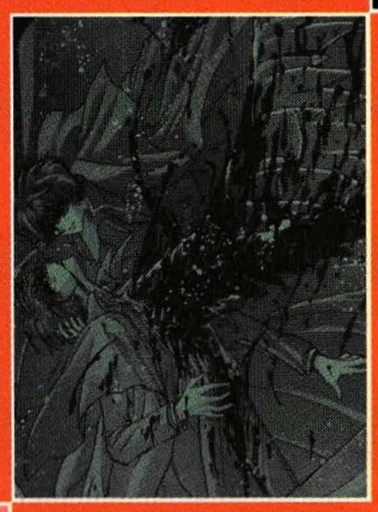
By Yu Watase

Miaka goes back to Qu-Dong to see Yui—and get Tamahome back. But Tamahome has other ideas....

Video Girl Ai

By Masakazu Katsura

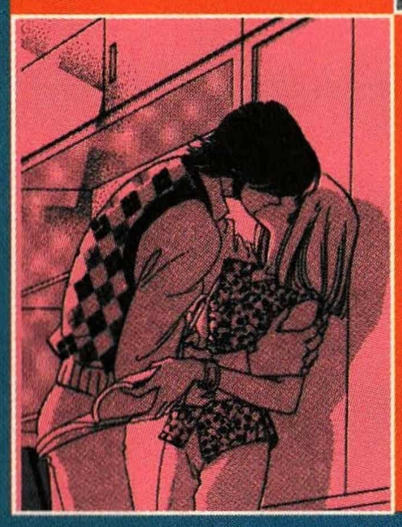
Ai can't figure out why she can't get Yota out of her head. And why does her grandfather keep telling her to never touch the VCR?



X/1999

By Clamp

A message left by the deceased Tokiko gives Kamui crucial information about the decision he must make....



Revolutionary Girl Utena

By Chiho Saito

Utena's aunt has hired a young man who looks exactly like Utena's prince. Can it be him?

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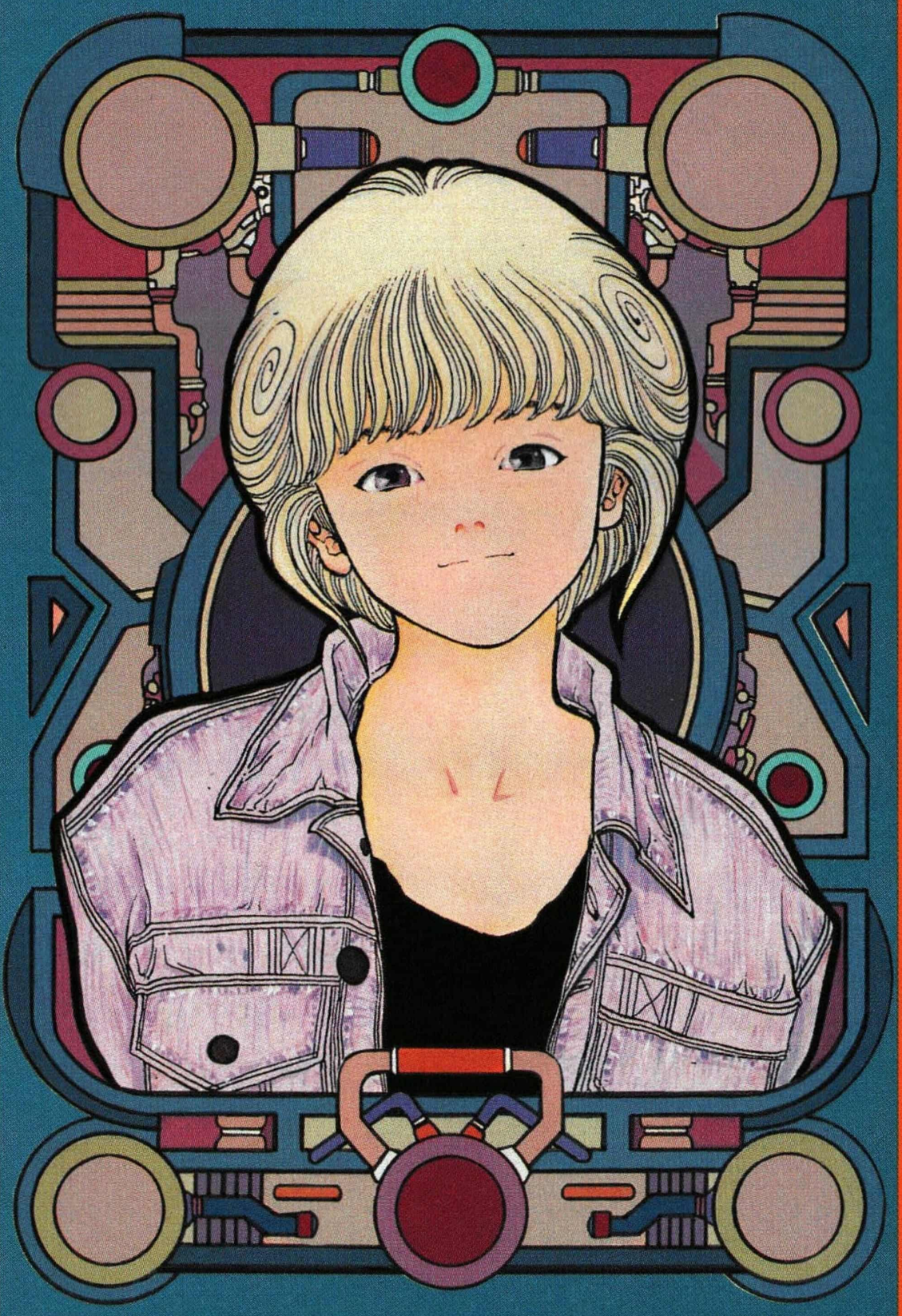
Vol. 4, No. 2

MASAKAZU KATSURA SPEAKS!

The creator of ***Video Girl Ai*** in our exclusive interview!



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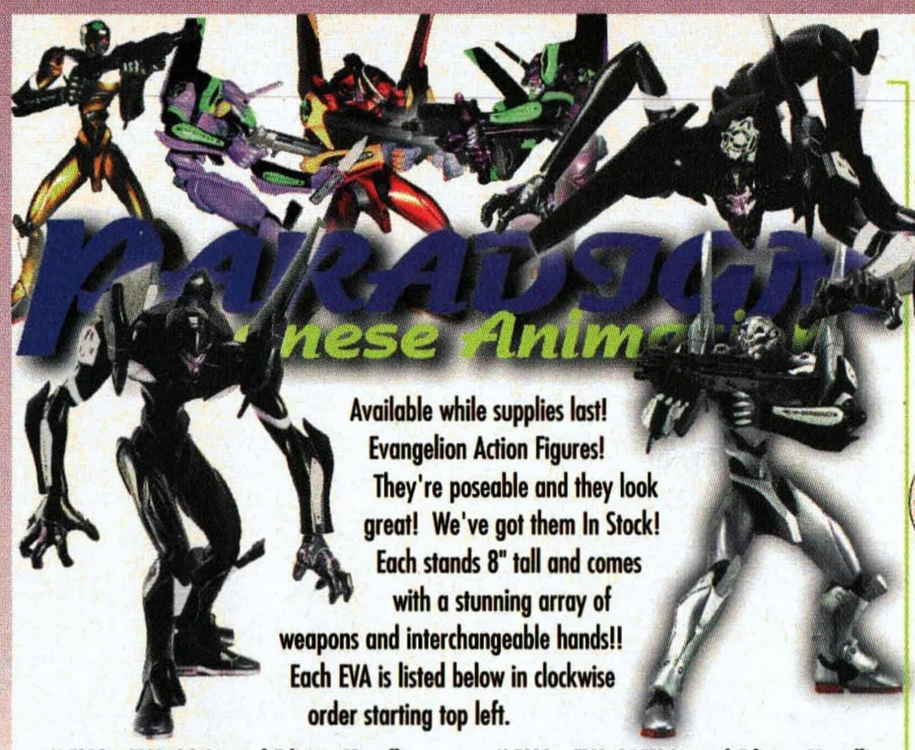
Fushigi Yûgi © Yu Watase/Shogakukan, Inc. • "X" © 1993 CLAMP • Steam Detectives © 1995 Kia Asamiya • Video Girl Ai © 1989 Masakazu Katsura • Marionette Generation © Haruhiko Mikimoto • Revolutionary Girl Utena © 1996 SAITO CHIHO/IKUHARA KUNIHIKO & BE PAPAS.



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Fushigi Yugi OVA V3: Reflections
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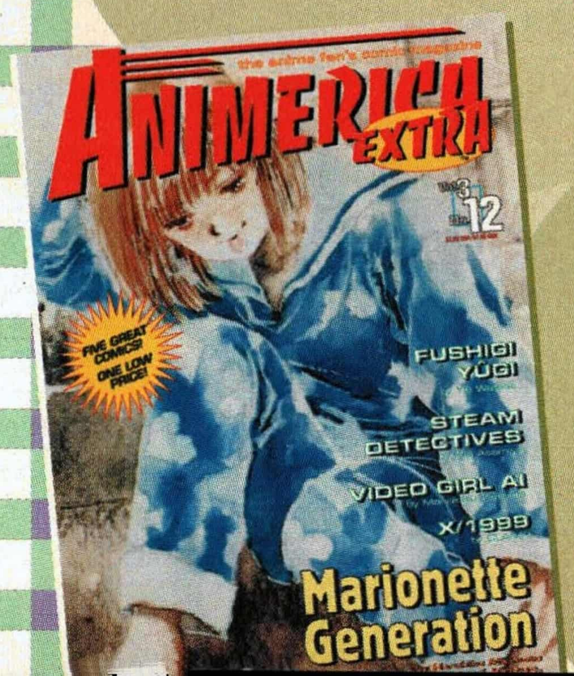

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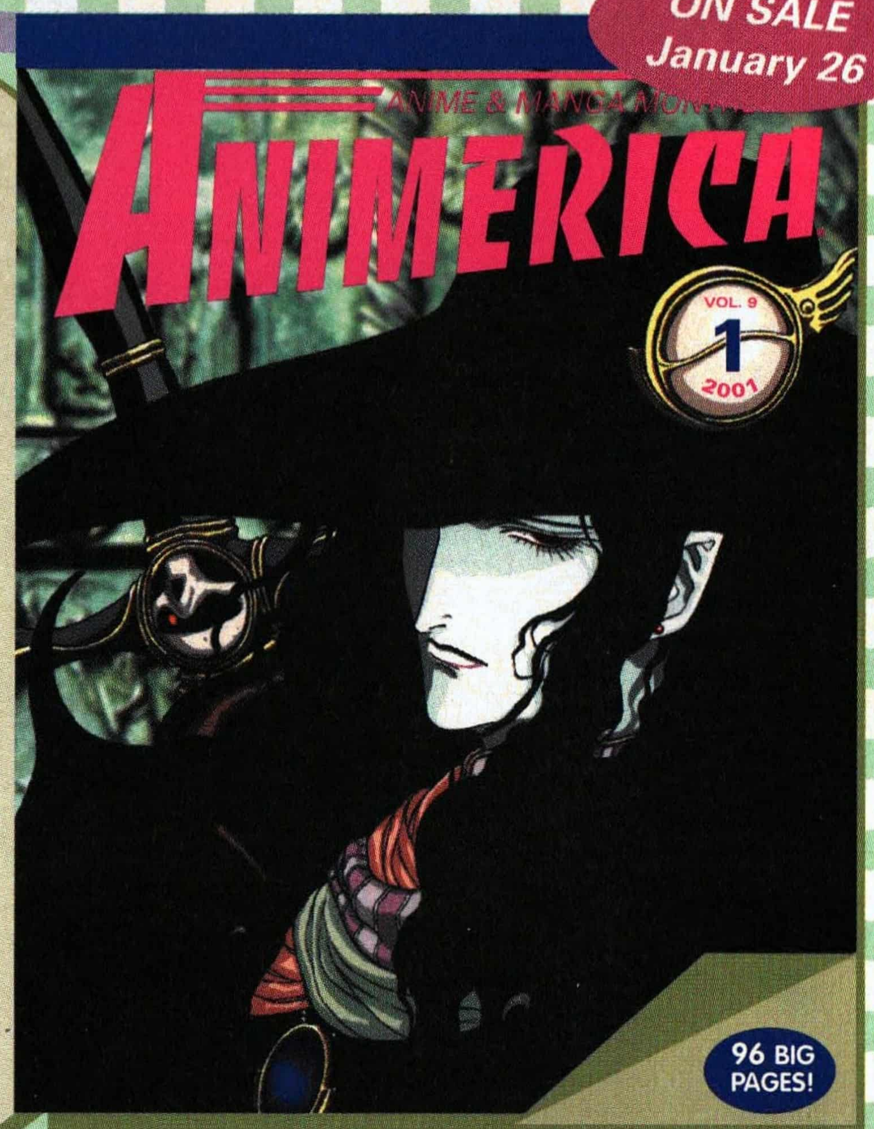

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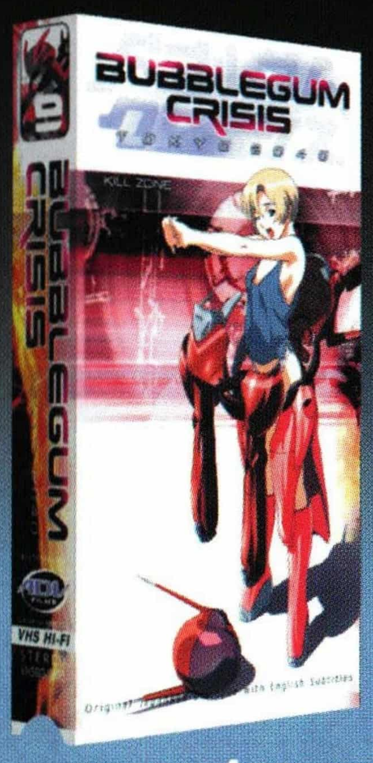

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